Vol 17 No. 2
127
Dec 1997

Polyhedron®
NEWSZINE

Have a Holly Jolly, Berk.

INSIDE THIS VERY ISSUE:

Your Initiative 2
Letter hacks rock!

Notes from HQ 3
Surprise! We change things!

Table Talk 4
what passes for news

Elminster's Everwinking Eye 6
Come to High Mukshar—please!

HOM Sector for the Hol-I-DAYs 8
Trust no one. Keep your present handy.

Game Days 10
Make your own holidays year 'round!

The Saving Grace of Valrenwood 11
A family adventure just in time for...

The Day of Grace 23
Sigil's New Year: where everyone shows mercy—for one day.

WINTER FANTASY™ Convention Preview 24

'98 Decathlon Info 26

A World of Your Own 30
The final installment of island campaigns

Behind the Screens 32
DM Tips return.

Plus all the regular stuff...

These letters have been hanging around for about a year, but they're still valid comments. Plus, it's too early for anybody to be sending me mail yet.

Dear POLYHEDRON®:

I am your average computer wizard and I spend a lot of time on the internet. I especially love your online conventions because they allow me to participate in RPGA functions since I cannot attend regular conventions. Unfortunately, I do not have Genie or AOL and I have to go to a friend's house to be a part of the action. I would like to know if you could hold electronic conventions over the internet. This would be ideal because gamers from Genie and AOL could also attend. I think this would boost popularity of electronic conventions, and also boost attendance at online conventions.

What is your input on this matter?

Yours truly,
Sam Hopfinger
Havertown, PA

This will soon be rampant at <www.tsr.com>. Using Netscape or Internet Explorer, follow the links from our site to download the appropriate plug-ins. Soon, we'll have a Network-only area filled with electronic goodness, including cons, so jump in!

If any average or even statistically deviant computer wizards want to help, apply to our online guy, Sean Reynolds at <skreyn@wizards.com>.

Dear POLYHEDRON:

I noticed in Issue #124 a mention of a proposed LIVING CITY™ Newsletter for $12/year. It sounds like a good concept, but I think the cost would be prohibitive to most teenage gamers, such as myself, because of the cost and the fact that we already pay a lot for POLYHEDRON. I would like to suggest that you incorporate this newsletter into POLYHEDRON magazine and then increase the cost of the magazine by say, $3 or $5 to cover the additional size.

Second, it is mentioned that interactives are "downtime" for characters. Again, being a youth, I find it hard to attend many roleplaying conventions, so I would ask that some LIVING CITY "downtime" events take place through a combination of POLYHEDRON magazine and either paper mail or email.

Thanks for your time and consideration. Keep up the good work!

James Sheldon
jsheldon@bigfoot.com

To bring everyone up to date: Poly used to be crowded with LIVING CITY campaign info, and before the dark times, we were planning on alleviating that by producing a separate LIVING CITY Newsletter. Instead, other things happened which I need not recount here.

The Newsletter is hibernating. It may still happen, but we have necessarily different priorities now. To read the Trumpeter, point your web browser to the official RPGA site. It's there now.

As for your LIVING CITY downtime concern, we must plead our humanity. We limit "official" downtime because we have but 24 hours in a day and four hands among us. Overseeing and regulating several thousand game transactions in a year would be literally overwhelming on top of our regular duties.

This next letter is... um, just read it.

Greetings Newzine Staff,

In response to many objections to the falling "o" in the POLYHEDRON, those concerned have formed this organization with one purpose: to have the falling "o" replaced with its respectable cousin, the standing "o." Some may ridicule our current lack of support, but for every voice heard, hundreds go unnoticed. CAPFO (Coalition Against the POLYHEDRON Falling "O") acknowledges these muffled cries and invites anyone with views on the falling "o" or other POLYHEDRON idiosyncrasies to join. Any interested parties or singular individuals can e-mail CAPFO HQ at the address below.

While I have everyone's undivided attention, I would like to thank the staff of the POLYHEDRON for taking their own initiative in asking for reader assistance. My own two cents? I enjoy the homemade feel of the letters page; it's nice to know what my fellow members are thinking, especially when we share the same interests (CAPFO). Seeing members' articles and classified ads also adds to the sense of community, and confidence that at any point I may attempt to better the POLYHEDRON with my own writing.

On this level, the POLYHEDRON is about us—all of us: working together to keep role-playing an entertaining experience that we can all walk away from with satisfaction. It's why we play, and why we read this newszine: interaction. It's why I'm writing this letter, and it's why everyone else in RPG land needs to say something. Let's all raise our voices as we raised our weapons in defense of the good guy, for we have an RPGA to rule!

Now that I've got the adrenaline pumping, may I say that I enjoy all the different aspects of the magazine, yet a little more here and a little less there couldn't hurt from time to time. Opinions change, and so can the article lengths. There's enough newszine for all of us, so I see no need for a POLYHEDRON revolution (besides, I'm not a hack-and-slasher). Let the POLYHEDRON be, it hasn't done anything to harm us. We should be nurturing our most vital source of information: writing articles, mailing letters, and asking questions about upcoming conventions. A difference can be through addition, and not subtraction.

Danielle Siecinski
CAPFO HQ: Siecida@lfc.edu
(please keep messages brief)

The ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION™ Network has no affiliation with the organization known as CAPFO. Their views are presented here as a public service, and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the staff of POLYHEDRON Newszine. Even though some of the staff really, really agree with it.

Please keep the letters and comments coming. We read everything that we get. Even if we can't respond to all of it, we really appreciate your input. Thanks.

—JEFF

Notes From

This ever-changing world which we live in...

Last issue, we presented the strategy for the future of the Network. In that article, we explained that tournament player points would be segmented by Campaign and Classic event types, and that we would put an average score requirement on advancing to a new "named" level, e.g. Master, Grand Master, or Paragon. If you did not get the last issue, call Customer Service at Wizards of the Coast and the nice folks there will arrange to get you a replacement.

Since that piece was written, we had some discussions, received some member feedback, and realized that we were trying to accomplish something by the wrong means.

The points system, in which you accumulate points for tournament play or service, measures how much you have played, not necessarily how good a player you are. You can get a lot of points for playing well, but you can get a lot of points for playing a lot too, without having to play well at all. In fact, you may not even care about roleplaying well; you just want to have a good time. We don't want to limit your advancement just because you have different priorities.

Since the points system does not allow us to recognize good players separately from consistent players, we tried to make it do so by imposing the average score requirement. This is, as we came to admit, the wrong way to accomplish the goal of recognizing good players.

Instead, we have come up with a system we think you will like better. We eliminated the requirement of average score per table for ranking advancement, so that anyone can advance to higher levels just by playing. We will still recognize players and judges who achieve higher ranks by printing their names and rankings in this magazine, along with members who earn a lot of service points.

In addition, we will create a quarterly Top 100 list of players and judges, to showcase those who have the best averages for the quarter. We plan to recognize these people in this magazine, and post the names of all recognized people to the website. This system better accomplishes our real goal, and as a side benefit has less of an effect on your level.

Change to FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL™ Membership

As a result of discussions around here, we have decided to limit FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL members to 2nd level in any player or judge ranking. These people will be able to accumulate more points, but their level will not go above 2nd. As a result, convention organizers do not have to worry about letting FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL members into Masters and above level tournaments, as anyone with a FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL card is not eligible for these events.

The Family Membership is Back

In light of changes to the FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL benefits, and member comments, we have decided to reinstate the Family Membership, but on slightly different terms. To have a Family Membership, there must be one member of the family who is a GUILD-LEVEL™ member. That person can authorize additional Family Members attached to his or her account number (though the members have their own numbers), provided the Family Members are members of the GUILD-LEVEL member's family and that they live at the same address. Additional Family Memberships cost $10 per year per member. Family Members receive the benefits of GUILD-LEVEL members except that they do not receive the Polyhedron or the special annual adventure.

1998 *Polyhedron* themes

Behold the themes for *Polyhedron* issues in 1998. Start writing now:

APR: jungle adventures
JUN: nautical adventures
AUG: superheroes
OCT: Thieves & their guilds
DEC: food & related matters

Additionally, we've restarting the DM tips column, and started a new city-building column. This will consist of narrow-focus articles under 1500 words about aspects of cities in campaigns: how to put them together, how a city gets water, or any topic generally pertaining to fantasy citites. We also still want cool news about your club or con—what makes it different and/or fun.

We like backhanded takes on normal topics, so go out on whatever limbs you see. You're probably not going to outweird us.

Articles with researched, real-world reference bring us glee. Details make a story, so spend some time looking over your subject matter. Bibliographies for dense subjects are nice too, so that curious readers can get more info.

Deadlines are three months before an issue will hit your mailbox. For example, the deadline for the April issue is the beginning of January. Moral: start writing now.

If you're not up to a whole article, send classified ads and convention announcements. They're free and only available to GUILD-LEVEL members. We'll probably print whatever crackpot scheme you send me. We're easy.

And of course, we're always looking for anything good. Don't feel constrained by what you see here. If we like it, we'll make room for it somewhere. This is your magazine, filled with things you wrote. So start writing now. ❑

Mother Nature
TSR, Inc.

Heat Miser
Lisa Stevens

Snow Miser
Robert Wiese

Jingle & Jangle
Donna Woodcock
Paul Alan Timm

Vixen
Jeff Quick

CORRECTIONS

Not so tough now, huh, mouth boy?

Robert Wiese's name has been repeatedly misspelled. We also misspelled **Andrew Hauptman's** in issue 124. Also in 124, **Steve Sampson** was incorrectly identified as "Will" Sampson in helping out with miniatures. Finally, due to space constraints, we didn't credit **Larry Elmore** with the hilarious cover for issue 125. The editorial we sincerely apologizes for these errors.

—the editor

COVER STORY: **Rob Lazzaretti, cartographer extraordinaire, provides us this month's cover shot of The Lady of Pain and a little girl who may not have a chin after this.**

Table Talk

Turn Up the Heat

If the thermometer on the right measured Fahrenheit degrees, the registered heat would melt rocks. It doesn't measure temperature though. It measures membership. And metaphorically, we want it hotter than that.

Specifically, the thermometer on the right measures U.S. RPGA GUILD-LEVEL™ membership. Right now, we have fewer than 7000 domestic GUILD-LEVEL members. In order to provide you with more services, we need that number raised.

Our crack team of accountants (Robert and Lisa) has determined that at 14,000 GUILD-LEVEL members we can produce a 64-page *Polyhedron* Annual alongside your regular bimonthly Poly. At press time, we are also cleverly devising incremental rewards for individual membership recruitment. We'll have more specific information on the website and in February Poly.

(Unfortunately, this doesn't count our worldwide membership. U.S. revenue goes to HQ in Seattle, while international revenue goes to whoever handles your paperwork. So to affect HQ office production, we need to increase U.S. membership. Sorry overseas types!)

The RPGA Network has more to offer members than ever before. Its scope and ability to serve has increased drastically since coming into the Wizards stable. We have an entire customer service department to answer your questions fast. We create an original, free, 32 page adventure for GUILD-LEVEL members every year, just to say "thanks." Our advanced web capabilities make tournaments a snap to get and run for game days(or any convention). Don't forget our web chat and online games available to *anyone* with internet access worldwide.

Effectively doubling membership isn't easy, but it's far from impossible. Use your head and sell the Network to potential members. You may know former members who let their membership lapse or gamers who were never involved in the first place. Tell them why you like the Network. You can also get involved with your retailer in the Adventurer's Guild Retail Program (see below for details) to recruit new members.

We'll update the thermometer in every issue to let you know how we're doing. Seven thousand more members in a year can be accomplished, but we all must pitch in to increase membership and play nice together. I'm sure we can do it.

Adventurer's Guild Retail Program Premieres in January

"No cons near me!" is the oft-heard wail among members who want to get more involved with the Network, but can't get to conventions. Up 'til now, this has stymied HQ too. How can we help these members play more and better games? What value can we provide for them?

We've hit upon an elegant answer: take it to the retailers. The RPGA Network proudly introduces the Adventurer's Guild Retail Program. This new program features four quarterly seasons of six tournaments each, with a new adventure every two weeks *sent to your local game or book store.*

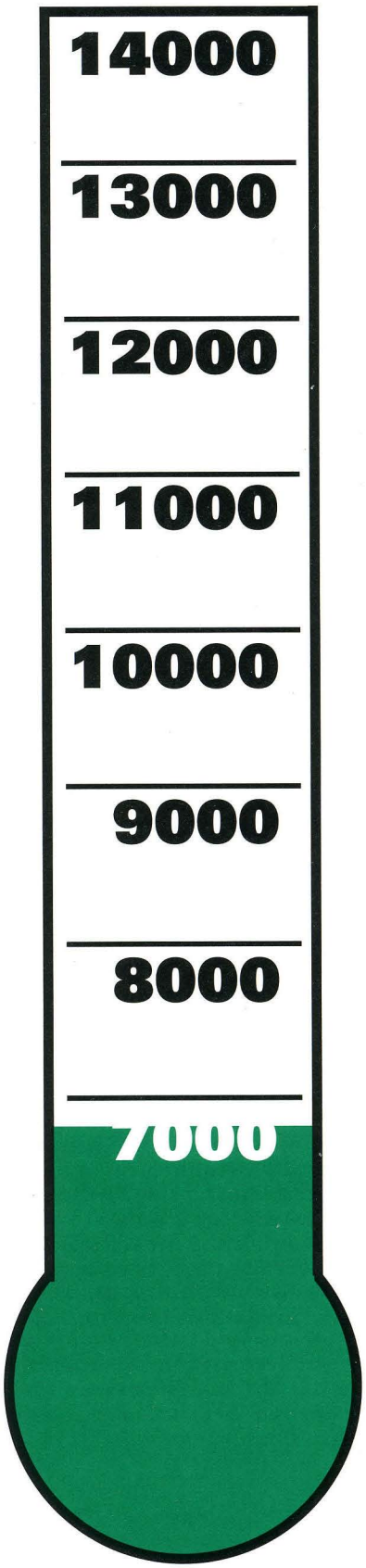
Each sanctioned Network tournament ties in to some of TSR's hottest new releases, and is written by our house of talented designers and freelancers.

Each season costs your retailer $20 and provides **six** tournaments featuring new products from TSR's game lines. The retailer gets all the tools necessary to run these sanctioned Network events, including scoring forms, fellowship membership cards, and the complete adventures. Each adventure will be sanctioned for a particular two week time period, so visit your store early and often.

Each featured products for the Winter Season has an accompanying adventure.The products for this Winter are:

January:
Tribes of the Heartless Wastes
BIRTHRIGHT® campaign setting
College of Wizardry
AD&D® game
February:
Cult of the Dragon
FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting
Heroes of Hope accessory
DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ game
March:
Jakandor: Odyssey setting
AD&D game
MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® accessory
PLANESCAPE® campaign setting

If your retailer isn't already taking advantage of this offer (and chances are good that we've been in touch), ask about it, or even volunteer to judge. Get him (or her!) to get in on these great sanctioned RPGA tournaments in 1998. It's real fun real near you!



editor-speak

This used to be the NEWScene. We decided to rename it.

Nowadays, we're calling it "Table Talk." We changed the name to reflect a more relaxed attitude towards Network news.

Now it's less about reporting news and more about just talking about what's going on. Besides, I never really liked the name "NEWScene." It was too... cute.

This change doesn't affect your responsibility to send in articles and pictures and clips about what your club is doing. Get off your keister and get started. These magazines don't just fall together by themselves.

1997 Network Decathlon Standings

Due to the confusions of this year, the Decathlon has seen lower participation than in the past. Nonetheless, the competition continues. These events have been posted so far:

Tournament Play

Sunquest

ARC Fellowship	4 points
DAWN	1 point
Sunquestors	1 point

Weekend in Ravens Bluff 3

Gamers Association of Mid-America (GAM)	4 points
Death Warmed Over (DWO)	4 points
Sunquestors	2 points
Rathskellar Gamers	1 point

Dragon Con

ARC Fellowship	4 points
Legion of the One Star (team)	3 points
Legion of One Star	2 points
DAWN	1 point

Summer Revel

DAWN	2 points

GEN CON® Game Fair

DAWN	4 points
DWO	4 points
GAM	2 points
Black Spot	1 point
Black Spot (team event)	1 point

The paperwork from the following conventions has not been received yet, so results cannot be posted.

RoundCon
ConnCon
Weekend in Ravens Bluff 3, SC & TX sites

Writing Events

Villain Lair or Base

GAM	4 points
ARC Fellowship	2 points
Legion of the One Star	1 point
Steele Justice	1 point

Sea Monster

Sunquestors	4 points
Legion of the One Star	2 points

Techno Toy

Rathskellar Gamers	4 points
DWO	2 points

Sidekick or Henchman

ARC Fellowship	4 points
Legion of the One Star	2 points
Rathskellar Gamers	1 point

One-Round Tournament

ARC Fellowship	5 points
Legion of SilverSheen	3 points
DAWN	1 point
GAM	1 point
DWO	1 point
PM Players	1 point

Multi-Round Tournament

Windriders	6 points
DWO	4 points
ARC Fellowship	2 points
DAWN	2 points
Players Guild of Central Oklahoma (PGCO)	2 points

The overall standings look like this:

Club	*Totals*
ARC Fellowship	21 points
Death Warmed Over	15 points
DAWN	11 points
GAM	11 points
Legion of One Star	10 points
Sunquestors	7 points
Rathskellar Gamers	6 points
Windriders	6 points
Legion of SilverSheen	3 points
Fellowship of Black Spot	2 points
PGCO	2 points
PM Players	1 point
Steele Justice	1 point

There are still the service events to post (two events were not entered) and the Club Newsletters to judge. Watch this space for final counts.

NEXT ISSUE BOX

Technology 'n' Games

character generation software—worth your cache?

PBEMs—got a modem? get in a game.

the Verge—help make our next LIVING™ setting

Table Talk

The Border Kingdoms

Elminster's Everwinking Eye

High Mukshar

by Ed Greenwood

One of three tiny realms named for their common origin, High Mukshar is a land of rocky outcrops, high, rolling meadows, and rubble walls, where sheep farming predominates. Many have become lost in its winding lanes and dense woods and heartily curse the place. More than a few outlanders camping under darkness have vanished forever.

This time around, our Border Kingdoms tour brings us to a forgotten backwater of those perilous realms. Like most such places, it's not a backwater because it's dull... or safe.

High Mukshar

Common belief holds that brigands shelter in the old, played-out mines that line the mountains along the western border of High Mukshar. While Elminster admits that outlaws do live in the old mines and prey on passersby, he disputes that the mines are exhausted. More gold and copper come out of High Mukshar than out of all the western Heartlands, he insists. It's just done the old way, with picks and mules, not by gangs of slaves, mages blasting rocks, and lines of ore wagons.

Within Mukshar, three abandoned settlements still provide shelter and good wells to travelers who dare to camp there. Tleska lies at the mouth of the Tumblestone River, where the crumbling Battleshield Bridge carries the coastal road across its waters. Three trails meet at a lone, fortified inn and smithy at Longsword. High in the mountain, Ramshead sits at the foot of the distinctive Broken Helm peak.

The real peril in High Mukshar, Elminster says, are the druuth. They are the reason that all three villages in the realm are now overgrown ruins. The druuth are small groups of doppelgangers led by mind flayers. There is always only one illithid, but the number of "shifters" vary from four to six. These groupings appeared early in this century, but in recent years have become a real (though unknown) peril. Elminster terms them "the rising scourge of the Realms," and says that they are common in the lands south of the Shaar and the Dustwall, though still rare elsewhere.

At least four druuth dwell in High Mukshar in an uneasy peace. Territories and ground rules were sorted out in a series of bloody battles that destroyed at least three other druuth, while one of the present groups was formed out of the fragments of two others. The remainders raid other Border realms carefully, employing disguises and striking seldom to remain untraceable.

Elminster warns travelers to avoid High

Mukshar unless they are capable of defeating such foes. When adventuring bands intrude into the monster-haunted mines or the high meadows, two or more druuth often combine to attack. Sometimes they slaughter survivors too tired to fight or who lack strength to even stand watch while part of the band sleeps.

Druuth are named for their leaders. Of the High Mukshar bands, Elminster knows only the names "Sshreea" and "Oinuth." These are probably not the true names of individual illithids, but short nicknames.

The humans, gnomes, halflings, and half-elves who dwell in High Mukshar keep away from the mountains. They spend nights in fortified caves and old cellars, always with a watch. Entrances are barricaded, and defenders are well-armed. Spearheads and crossbow bolts are coated with a sleep venom against humans, human crossbreeds (such as half-elves), dopplegangers, illithids, and many other amphibians. Other bolts are coated with pitch for fiery use.

Remember that the High Muksharran don't know who their foes are—only that things who can falsely assume the shapes of friends and loved ones lurk in the mountains and the old mines. And these things slay—and eat—folk who venture too near.

For their part, the druuth prey on the Muksharran as little as possible. They feel that nearby cattle are easy meat, and should be saved for bad weather, hard winters, and other times when hunting is difficult, uncomfortable, or dangerous.

History

High Mukshar was not always thus. Twenty winters ago it boasted a Lord in Tleska, and two High Knights (one in each of the two upland villages). These three men were all retired adventurers or warriors from Tethyr, wore splendid armor and cantered fine horses along the trails of the realm. The druuth made sure that they died first—slain in their beds. Lords and armsmen both died until no man who'd ever fought for a living was alive in the land. The body count to reach that undefended state was less than thirty.

A company of adventurers arrived soon after, but stripped of their mage and priests (a task involving doppelgangers shaped like attractive women), the dozen swords held by the Brave and Bold of Bedorn didn't last long.

The Company of the Tristar Lance, out of Baldur's Gate and thirsty for "the gold and gems that spill out of every cupboard and cottage in the Border Kingdoms," were next to arrive—and fall. Then a caravan of ironmongery disappeared. Word of "the fell doings in High Muk" spread around the Border Kingdoms, and new arrivals became few.

The druuth decided subtlety was in order, and began the careful series of expeditions they continue to this day. They've struck and slain as far afield as Oparl and the Duskwood. They even spent an entire year hunting in Jundarwood, leaving the High Muksharran to gain false hope again.

Yet fear and sorrow lurk in the hearts of the Muksharran. They recall Lord Baelim, "the Laughing Lord," and his three fair ladies with the long, streaming hair. They remember the tall and noble Athkontan, High Knight of Longsword, and the short, stout, Baerben "Three Tankards" Nuim, High Knight of Ramshead. They whisper of "the Others" who slew them, and who lurk in their land even now, able to "wear the masks" of folk, and get close enough to rend with claws and kill with bone spikes. They wonder who these Others are, why they came to High Mukshar, and who could possibly destroy them.

Three Harper bands have tried and failed. One Harper out of all those fair folk survived. She is given to bouts of weeping madness, and now keeps to the inner rooms of Twilight Hall. A Red Wizard of Thay, hoping to seize the Others' magic, came to the realm. He saw no approaching foes in his sleep.

The closest thing High Mukshar has to a ruler today is the smith at Longsword, Draldimor Thorn (LN hm F9; ST 18/24, CON 17). He is tall, stout-muscled, and humorless, but has a firm sense of law, order, and right. He trains all in his stockaded household at arms, and warily plies his trade with the few travelers to come through the realm. Under his hearthstone lie 302,800 pieces of gold, amassed from smithing and the sale of gold nuggets down the years. He will give it all to any adventurers who rid the realm of "the Others," and let High Mukshar rise again.

Where to Stop

Right now, the traveler can get provender (cheese, bread, small beer, and stew) at two farms near Tleska, and at Thorn's Smithy in Longsword. The only inn and tavern still operating in High Mukshar face each other across the coastal road east of the Tumblestone, close enough to Middle Mukshar that the river is only a silver ribbon in the distance. They are The Wailing Wolf tavern (Fair/Cheap) and Anglabur's Haven inn (Good/Moderate). Both have fenced lands and hired guards. Both have also been touched recently by suspicion and fear, as the druuth (using the guise of comrades) have begun to slay the best warriors of the guards.

The realm has few landmarks beyond the aforementioned Broken Helm (a mountain whose north flank is rounded and conical, but riven to the south, falling away in sheer cliffs) and the Rise, an isolated hill that the Tumblestone River goes around three sides of. Its crest sports an ancient, ring-shaped fort (the base of a long-fallen tower), and from its stones one can look clear across neighboring Nether Mukshar.

Unless one likes battling monsters (they swarm in some mines) or thinks that gold can be had by anyone daring enough to ride in and scoop it up (false, unless "scoop it up" refers to tons of raw ore), there's little reason to visit High Mukshar now. Elminster says that at least one mine—Ilthamar's Delve, in the southern mountains—does descend to meet Underdark passages, which ultimately link up with the Deep Realm of the dwarves. But, as the ballad goes, "There are faster and safer ways to meet one's doom" than descending a mine in the backlands of High Mukshar.

Adventurers are (of course) expected. Elminster is eager to hear all about their victories, and promises that any who venture into High Mukshar will find a welcome both from the Muksharran—and the Others. ❑

—Golthlas Keireiryn

The Border Kingdoms? I seem to recall losing an army there once—in battle, I think.

Satrap of Calimlaratha
replying to a Harper at an inn
Year of the Prince

HOM Sector For The Hol-I-DAYs

A PAranoia Nugget Adventure by Steven Brown & Ed Stark

Traitors roasting on an open fire
Jackobots standing in a row
Treasonous confessions being sung by a liar
Things the Computer already knows

excerpt from Old Reckoning
"X-Man Carol Channing"

The Romantics have never had the catchy slogans of the Politiclones, the driving fanaticism of PURGE, or even the cool logo of the Frankenstein Destroyers, so they have to work harder to attract new members. Recently they delved into their collection of Old Reckoning knowledge and memorabilia to come up with the pledge drive gimmick of the yearcycle: a "Hol-I-DAY."

This Hol-I-DAY, obviously named after a prominent Old Reckoning citizen, came at the end of every yearcycle, and centered around the ritual giving of something called "presents." These apparently were things that clones gave to one another, at extremely short range, which almost never exploded. There was even one clone who reportedly made it his entire life's work to sneak into other clones' creches, fully armed with hundreds of "presents," with the sole purpose of leaving one or two around, knowing full well that they would never go off or cause anything more than minor emotional damage.

Granted, he did occasionally hide small "presents" in Junior Citizens' footwear, and often consumed large quantities of their KrunchyTyme AlgaeChips and a liter or two of Hot or Cold Fun, but this was considered an acceptable tithe (usually referred to as the "yule tithe").

The Romantics revived this tradition. They began distributing "presents" among the Alpha Complex citizens, first secretly, and then right out in the open! Despite the expectations of the recipients, these presents never exploded either... well, hardly ever. This increased membership in the Romantics dramatically. Soon they were the most popular secret society in Alpha Complex.

This, the other secret societies realized, would have to change.

Free Enterprise

"Presents?" Gift-"giving?!?" Among the foulest words in the Free Enterprise Lexicon (now on sale at your local Infrared Market Store—cheap)!

The "Crazy Eddies" had to get in on this racket! They figured anything those Pi-in-the-sky Romantics could do for free, Free Enterprise could do better and turn a profit. They spread around a few semolians (when that didn't work, they used plasticreds) and got the lowdown on this Hol-I-DAY crap. All they needed now was an angle. So, they turned 90° and bumped into Santa Clone™.

Santa Clone (All Rights Reserved, Free Enterprise Marketing Division, pat. pend.) was an Ultraviolet Exec in the hierarchy of Free Enterprise who adopted the Hol-I-DAY as his personal project.

He puzzled for hourcycles till his puzzler was sore.

He knew that this Hol-I-DAY needed just a bit more.

It had to have ribbons! It had to have tags!

It had to have packages, boxes, and bags!

And so, Santa Clone laid down the law!

The Santa Clause

In regards to "presents" and gift-"giving," all clones must observe the following protocol.

- All presents must be purchased at official Santa Clone Hol-I-DAY stores.
- All clones must spend 10% more than their yearcycle's income on holiday presents.
- All clones must give more presents than they receive.
- Presents that do not break during shipment, or malfunction within the first 30 daycycles are treasonous material.
- Presents may not explode... usually.
- Any presents that do explode, killing potential customers, may be returned for a full refund.[1]
- All sales are final. All complaints should be directed to Internal Security.

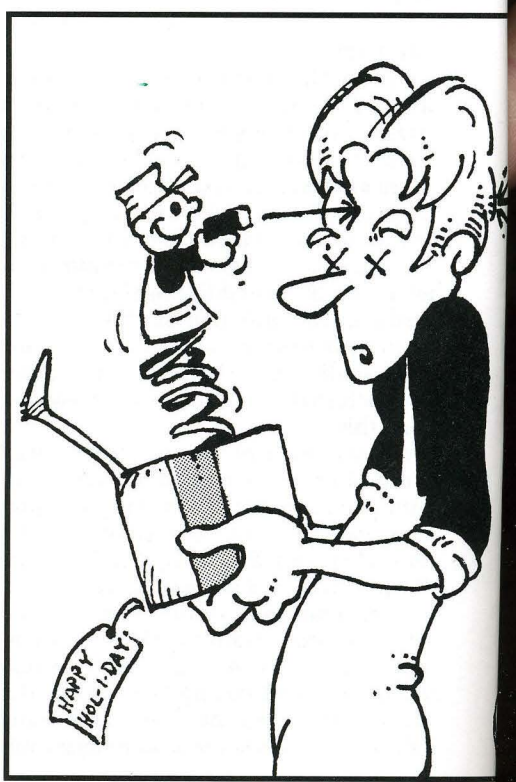
[1] All pieces (of the present, not the clone) must be returned in the original package.

SantaBot

The citizens of Alpha Complex were enjoying Hol-I-DAY so much that the bots grew envious—again. After all, no one ever gives presents that don't explode to a warbot, and scrubots have to clean up after all the office parties. They decided that they needed their own Hol-I-DAY champion, so they created SantaBot.

All bot secret societies agreed that this was necessary, so each contributed to the construction of SantaBot and the writing of its software. For example, the Botlers instilled in SantaBot the desire to serve and please everyone by giving as many gifts as mechanically possible. Methanolics Anonymous programmed SantaBot to be a good J.O.E. (Jolly Old Elfbot), though this often means it is incapable of safely driving its miniature sleigh and eight tiny transbots (provided by L-5). The Asimafia gave it a keen sense of competitiveness, so that SantaBot could compete with the slew of organic SantaBot wannabes. The Frank-N-Furters ripped out its Asimov circuits so it could operate freely throughout Alpha complex. Corpore Metal, Affirmative Action, and the Rock 'Em, Sock 'Em Warbots just wanted it to blow things up, so they gave SantaBot tracking systems and nuclear missiles in case anyone got rude.

SantaBot has moved beyond its programming and treats clones and bots alike. It celebrates the "spirit of giving" in a unique and special way. Anyone who receives a gift from SantaBot has a set, preprogrammed (but classified) period of time in which to pass it on to another lucky clone or bot. When the new owner receives the gift, the timer



art by Stan!

resets itself (randomly) and the fun begins again. SantaBot does not take kindly to citizens or bots who simply try to dispose of its gifts. SantaBot calls this "naughty." The gifts it gives all contain a small, friendly nuclear charge to discourage naughtiness. The explosive goes off when the timer runs out or if the gift is left unattended for more than 30 seconds (the blast radius assures that the owner will revel in the joy his present creates).

Of course, SantaBot rewards "nice" clones and bots... usually by giving them more presents.

Death The Halls

This is an adventure hook to help your clones get into the Hol-I-DAY spirit. Ho Ho Ho! Merry XY chromosome.

The Briefing aka Hol-I-DAY Evecycle

The Troubleshooters are issued, along with other equipment, a "present." The Service Groups have all gotten together to give the Computer a gift. The Troubleshooters have been given the honor of bestowing this "present" upon the Computer at Its nearby node.

Fearing the "present's" destruction by traitors in Alpha Complex, the Service Groups have wrapped it in an indestructible, silver cube (tied with a nice purple ribbon). Even the Briefing Officer has no idea what is in the box, and hands the "present" over to the care of the Troubleshooters most gingerly. Furthermore, he informs them that they will be held personally accountable for the safety delivery of the "present." The "present" must be carried by the Troubleshooters, but can use its own limited power to track and find the team should they accidentally "lose it." If it is not delivered to the Computer in time, their entire clone families will be terminated. In other words, he suggests they hurry.

Secret Society Missions aka More Naughty Than Nice

Between the briefing and the actual mission, each Troubleshooter is secretly contacted by his secret society and informed that he must, at all costs, prevent the present from arriving at the Computer node. It should be intimated that the "present" contains information and/or a weapon that will be used to decimate the secret society.

The Mission aka Dash Away All

Since this is Hol-I-DAY season, the Troubleshooters encounter the Romantics on their recruiting drive, Santa Clone and the rest of Free Enterprise, spreading their "yule tithe cheer," as well as the deranged SantaBot, who probably strafes them with gifts as he streaks by on his sleigh (at mach 1).

As if this wasn't enough trouble, various traitors and secret society members try to steal or destroy the Computer's "present," apprehend or otherwise kill the Troubleshooters, or, worst of all, sing Hol-I-DAY carols at them. The Troubleshooters won't be able to fight their way through all these obstacles, and may be forced to participate in some of the "festivities" to survive and complete their mission.

The "present" is completely indestructible and will easily survive any attack. If the present is stolen, it will remain so for as long as the Troubleshooters actively seek it (or until the joke becomes unfunny). Then it motors back to them under its own power, none the worse for wear. It does, however, have an annoying tendency to occasionally tick, rattle, or begin a ten secondcycle countdown for no apparent reason.

Mission's End aka Laying A Finger Aside His Nose

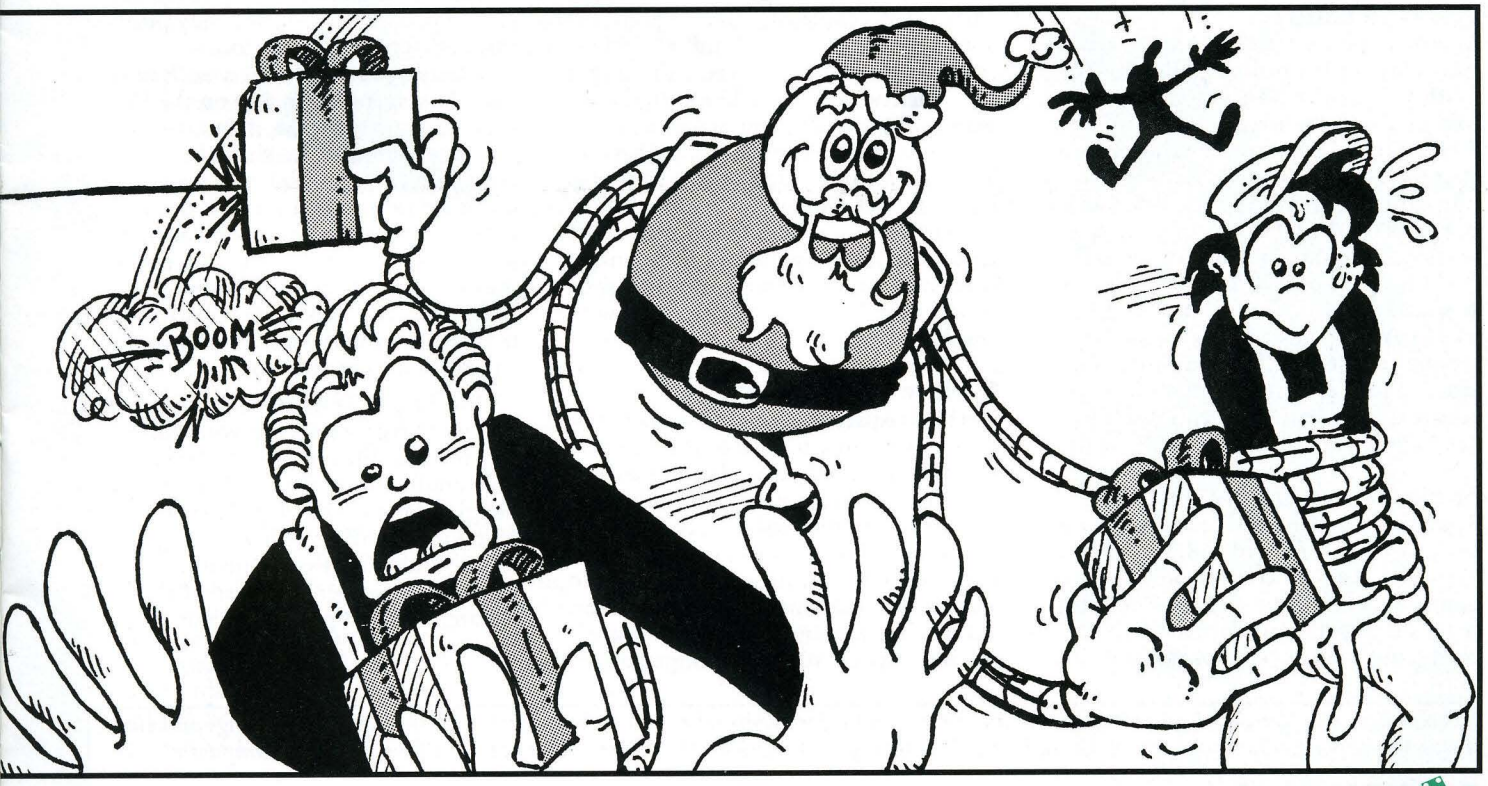
When the team reaches the Computer node, after facing one last battle or challenge, the survivors place the "present" under the giant, ever-watching eye of the largest Computer screen they've ever seen. Glowing beams of light lift the cube into the air and, as the Troubleshooters step back in fear and awe, the Computer unwraps Its "present."

Argyle socks.

The Computer's giant eye looks at the socks. Then back at the Troubleshooters. Then the socks. Then the Troubleshooters. Just when they can bear the silence no longer, the Computer's booming voice speaks:

"Just what I've always wanted. It's just the right size. Thank you. Have a nice Hol-I-DAY!"

All the survivors are promoted two security clearances. Just this once.



(un)Conventional Holidays

Running a Game Day—The Ins and Outs

by Robert Wiese

One of the chief benefits of Network membership is the ability to play Network-sanctioned tournaments in your favorite game systems at conventions worldwide. The tournament program has long been the cornerstone of the Network, and will continue to be. But what if you live in boonie-land and there are no conventions anywhere near you? Or worse yet, what if you live in an urban metropolis and there are still no conventions near you? Or what if you cannot afford to spend a weekend in a hotel at a convention? How do you enjoy the cornerstone of the Network in these situations?

You could run your own convention. You don't need a hotel, dealers, and all the rest to have a wonderful game convention. You don't even need a whole weekend. And you don't need a lot of money either. You can run a one-day convention, or a "Game Day," with very little planning and almost no money. To have a successful Game Day, you need four things: 1) a day to hold it, 2) some games to play, 3) a place to play them, and 4) some people to play them. Let's look at these items.

A Day to Hold It

Weekend days, usually Saturdays, are the best choices for holding a Game Day. With sufficient advance notice, you can expect a fair attendance of people who won't have to miss work or church to be there. Holiday weekends have their ups and downs. At these times, attendance depends on the tendency of your target audience (explained below) to go out of town for the holiday. You might be able to get away with "Game Nights" during the week, but success in a Game Night frequently depends on having a game store to play at or a club that meets and wants to play games. If you don't have these, stick with the Game Day to start.

Some Games to Play

Four hours is the ideal amount of time for one "slot" of a role-playing game. Typically, you can comfortably fit three game slots into a single day. Four slots means that you play from 8 AM to midnight, and even big cons which schedule four slots a day expect you to take one off sometime. With three slots, you can start new games at 10 AM, 2 PM, and 7 PM. This leaves an hour for a food run between 6 and 7 PM, and gets everyone out around 11 PM. You can start earlier or later, depending on the availability of your site, but don't leave large breaks between games the first time out. You want people to be active the whole time they are at your Game Day, so that they have a great time and want to come to the next one (or even help run it).

Roleplaying games are the easiest to get. The Network's tournament library is filled with sanctioned events just waiting to be used; all you have to do is ask. The cost is a mere $10 per round. For that, you get prizes and the necessary paperwork to allow Network members to receive points for playing. With three slots, you only need two or three rounds, so the total cost for the events is not more than $30, provided you request them four months in advance.

A Tournament Request Form explains how to get Network events. You can get these from our Network website, <www.tsr.com/rpga>, or just email or phone us. We're happy to help.

You probably have other sources of games. You probably own a few board games that people can play, or you have a local game store which might provide them if you work out a deal. You might have a friend you can talk into running a game. You can also contact game companies themselves and explain what you are trying to do. Frequently they will help you get a game or two, and even provide some prizes for the winner. Check the world wide web for contact information on game companies, or contact the Network. We can help with contact information too.

A Place to Play Them

This is frequently the easiest part. You may not be able to find a hotel to give you free space for game play, but a community center, high school, church, Moose Lodge, or similar place has space that they will let you use (usually free). Contact the local official or pastor to work it out, but try to get the space free. Advertise (see below) to the space's usual audience: students, congregation, Moose members, whatever.

Some People to Play Them

This may be the hardest or the easiest part, depending on your resources. Advertising is cheap; About $10 buys more than 100 bright flyers that grab attention. Spread them around town for the few weeks before the Game Day. You might be able to run an ad in the community newspaper for no cost (or almost no cost), or get the paper to write a story about your Game Day (which is free).

If you are running Network events, you will need people to run them unless you plan to run them all yourself (which limits the number of players to six per slot), so be sure to solicit help.

Your local game store or book store is a good place for this; gamers buy books. Ask if you can put a flyer or card near the cash register asking for people to run games. The store will probably cooperate, since they will sell more games if people are playing more games. You can also contact the Network for some help; we can put you in touch with any local RPGA Game Clubs near you and with the Regional Director (RD) for your area. The RD can help you find local Network members to attend and perhaps DM games. Other game companies you have contacted may provide this help for their games too.

Charge your attendees a buck or two each. You spent about $50 on the Game Day, on tournaments, flyers, supplies, and gas. Attendee fees should cover this cost. Don't charge a lot; you want a "we cover our share and no one is making money" atmosphere, at least at first. If you make a profit, you can use the money to hold the next Game Day, or donate it to a local charity. Charity work is a visible way for our hobby to contribute to the community.

Running a Game Day is easy and fun, and will bring gamers in your community out into the open. Even if you never hold another one, you will have met new people to game with regularly, and as a Network member you will be getting more value out of your membership. It just takes one person to start the ball rolling. Will that person be you?

❑

Disclaimer: The Network sanctions and provides tournaments for events where the public is welcome, such as club meetings and Game Days, not private gaming groups. Network LIVING™ campaigns are designed for tournament play, not for your home campaign.

The Saving Grace of Valrenwood

An original AD&D® 2nd Ed. adventure

Written by Shaun Horner Edited by Miranda Horner

This adventure is designed for mid-ranged characters from 5th to 7th level (a total of about 30 levels). It can be a stand-alone adventure or adapted into an existing campaign. Wherever possible, page references have been provided to save space and time for a DM. The adventure has been based with the provided characters in mind. Should a DM wish to change this, it can easily be accomplished with little time and work.

DM Outline

It's just before the Harvest Festival, and all of the village of Valrenwood is alive with preparations for the upcoming festivities. The player characters have come home after many years of adventuring to be with old friends and family. On their long journey, they have heard rumors that a terrible plague has swept the village. Despite their efforts at learning more, little else can be discovered until they reached the village.

Once in the village, the characters find out that animals are dying from some mysterious illness and that some people are missing. So far, only the village elder's daughter has been affected by the plague. Villagers who are asked about the matter mention that the council runs just as smoothly without Elder Dalmon as with him. High Theocrat Renald has been making sure that Elder Dalmon has been much too busy taking care of his sick daughter to pay any attention to the day-to-day operations of the village. In the meantime, preparations for the upcoming Harvest Festival are being taken care of by High Theocrat Renald and the acting captain of the watch.

After talking to High Theocrat Renald and Elder Dalmon, the characters can take their investigation to the druid, who provides Renald with his herbs. Once they reach the hermit's hut, however, they find him dead. The perpetrators of this murder are creatures known as histachii yuan-ti. Once the characters go back to the village, they find out that the Elder Dalmon's daughter has been the victim of the process of histachii transformation. If the characters investigate the trail of the histachii, they find themselves at the old chapel. A dark ceremony which heralds the transformation of the villagers into histachii is being performed by High Theocrat Renald. If the characters break up the ceremony and survive, then they have a chance to end the whole yuan-ti threat that has been growing in the area.

Major NPCs

The DM will probably need to know more about the NPCs than the surrounding village. Most of the villagers are 0-level humans with a scattering of demihuman races. If the PCs provided with the module aren't used, then the DM may need to add specific family members and acquaintances to the characters' background.

Elder Dalmon, Village Elder, hm F12: AC 9; MV 9 (old age); hp 44; THAC0 10 (Strength penalties); #AT 3; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d6 (walking staff); SZ M (5'9" tall); ML champion (16); AL NG. S 5, D 10, C 11, I 12, W 13, Ch 14.
Personality: calm, fatherly
Equipment: walking staff

Sucris Renald, High Theocrat of Dushana province, hm C10* (Yuan-ti pureblood): AC 3 (chain mail, ring of protection +2); MV 12; HP 49; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (mace), poison (type M); SA; SZ M (5'10" tall); ML fanatic (18); AL NE**; XP 3,000. S 10, D 14,

Erik Kilton

Male Human
9th Level Priest

STR:	12	Ht:	5'8"
DEX:	15	Wt:	180
CON:	9	Age:	37
INT:	15	Hair/Eyes:	Br/Br
WIS:	16	Skin:	Fair
CHR:	10	Alignment:	LG

AC Normal: 1 Rear: 3
THAC0: 16 Hit Points: 37

Weapon Proficiences: Club, Footman's flail, Quarterstaff, Staff sling.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Agriculture (15), Etiquette (10), Heraldry (15), Reading/Writing Regional (16), Religion (16), Spellcraft (13), Astrology (15)

Languages: Regional, Ancient, Modern, Common

Magical Items: *mace +2*; scroll—*heal, dispel evil*; *chain mail +3; shield +1*

Equipment: holy symbol, backpack, normal clothing, 10 platinum, 40 gold.

Erik is the moral compass of the group. His love for everyone has carried the group through many tight fights and long hauls. He believes in the church he serves regardless of the fact that his religion allows the it's priest to serve both sides of the good/evil fight. It's an unusual religion, but it has served him well.

Raised by the church in the small village of Valrenwood, he is pleased to be back to visit family. Though orphaned, he has many friends amongst the villages, all had high hopes that he would succeed—to date he has.

While Erik was an orphan given to the church to raise, he certainly didn't grow up lonely. In fact, he was often kept so busy that he hardly noticed that he had no parents. Back when he was a child, he shared the dubious honor of being a church orphan with another individual—Sucris Renald. The religious enthusiasm that Erik

shared with this thin, sickly child was as heated in fervor, but it differed in practical applications. Erik chose to take his knowledge to people at all corners of the known world, while Sucris Renald believed that the church was better served by a clergyman who preached in a set location. Under the guidance of the old High Theocrat, both Erik and his orphan brother served long and well for the church. From day one, however, the two of them voiced their differences privately and vehemently. Their reunion will be short and businesslike, unless the years have softened Sucris and brought to him the knowledge that the word of one's god should be spread far and wide—in which case Erik plans on trying to mend the relationship that they both shared but inevitably tried to avoid once their differences became too set forcompromise to be reached.

Stephen Crowsford: This adorable lug has grown to be the group protector and the protector of your church and faith. While not as smart as many, he can be more than loyal. Erik is hoping that he can bring the paladin and the ranger Brittney together in marriage.

Borfuss Ironheld: This dwarf is okay. While he doesn't listen to Erik's faith and teachings, he does protect Erik and respect him.

Rhiana Crowsford: Sister of the great Stephen. She's a bit too competitive with Stephen. She has potential and doesn't need to be so bullheadish if she would only realize it.

Marcus Ducknell: A bit misguided. Perhaps Erik can get the thief to see that he should stop his nefarious ways.

Brittney Toris: A beautiful woman who should not be so tomboyish. When she is with Stephen, it is possible to see this side. Perhaps she can forget her past by falling in love with Stephen, but there is only so much prodding a man can do.

C10, I 13, W 15, Ch 16. Personality: conniver, double-agent.

• Racial note: Due to his extreme devotion to his dark god, High Theocrat Renald has been rewarded by being transformed into a pureblood yuan-ti. He keeps his former human abilities and stats, but he also gains those of the pureblood yuan-ti.

• Alignment note: The Theocrat uses a magical item to hide his alignment. With this magical item, he can also project a particular alignment should he realize that someone is checking. He usually has it set to LG.

Equipment: *ring of mind shielding, ring of protection* +2, chain mail, mace.

Spells (5/5/3/3/2): 1st—*command, cure light wounds, detect magic, entangle, protection from good*; 2nd—*charm person, heat metal, hold person, know alignment, slow poison*; 3rd—*animate dead, cause disease, meld into stone*; 4th—*cure serious wounds, giant insects, spell immunity* (he usually chooses *fireball*); 5th—*cure critical wounds, flame strike.*

Special Abilities: Flexible torso (+1 to saves using Dex), cause fear, darkness (15 foot radius), snake charm, sticks to snakes, neutralize poison, suggestion, polymorph other.

Second Lt. Nertus, acting Captain of the village watch, hem F5/T5: AC 3 (banded mail); MV 10 (slightly encumbered); HP 39; THAC0 16; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); SZ M (5' 7" tall); ML steady (12); AL NE; XP 175.S 17, D 16, C 15, I 9, W 7, Ch 10. Personality: ambitious, dour

Equipment: banded mail, long sword

Thief abilities: PP 15, OL 25, F/R 20, MS 25, HS 40, DN 25, CW 35, RL 15.

Fredrick Napal, acting village sage, hm B6: AC 4 (studded leather); MV 12; HP 35; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword), 1d4 (dagger); SZ M (6'0" tall); ML elite (14); AL NG. S 9, D 17, C 14, I 13, W 15, Ch 16. Personality: fun-loving, opportunistic

Equipment: studded leather, short sword, dagger, pan flute [if you want a totally happy ending, give him a *ring of wishes* with one wish left so that he can reverse the histachii transformation!]

Thief abilities: PP 40, DN 50, CW 60, RL 35.

Spells (3/2): 1st—*comprehend languages, grease, jump*; 2nd—*invisibility, ray of enfeeblement.*

The village sage has been dead for two weeks. The captain of the guard is missing, and presumed dead.

Napal is provided for some comic relief or as an NPC to join the party should the group be short of people. Regardless, he sees the death of the sage as a way to get money on a continual basis instead of singing in taverns from town to town. He is not evil and will provide some information that he has learned (see the random rumor table on page 15).

PC Background

Read the following aloud:

It has been a long and tiring road back to the village where you spent a great deal of your youth. Many things have changed in the years since you played in the fields. The province theocrat has moved his main church from outside Valrenwood into the village. This has allowed him better access to the faithful—and the offerings that come with a larger population base. The old chapel has fallen to ruin and overgrowth in the meantime.

The village of Valrenwood itself is growing. Recently, you have heard of an influx of people. These people have come to share the rich soil that seems so plentiful around the village. Valrenwood may grow out of its sheltered youth just as you have done.

Although the weather has been melancholy (it has rained with the precision of a drummer for most of the past eight days), the trip has yet been uneventful. While at times the dampness took the form of a sound-dampening mist, at others, it seemed as if a cacophony of water-filled buckets dropped from the sky. This type of weather has not improved your moods at all. On top of the ill-omened weather, you have started hearing rumors that a plague has struck the animals and even some villagers in Valrenwood. With this news, you have sped up your pace in the hopes that you'll arrive at the Happy Jackal Tavern before nightfall. From there you can check on your relatives and make sure that everything is fine.

The DM may wish to supply the damp characters with either a planned or random encounter to alleviate their tempers

(or make them worse). To give the characters a taste of what they might find, the DM is also encouraged to use the following encounter before they reach the tavern and just before reaching Valrenwood.

Encounter One: Mongrels, the Lot of You!

The following encounter can take place to spur the player characters' interest in the adventure. The evil High Theocrat Renald has ordered a small group of his mongrelmen to start terrorizing incoming merchants and other visitors. He is at the point in his plan where outsiders would prove to be a large problem that he doesn't wish to deal with. Should this tactic succeed, the Theocrat then has only to take the lives of the villagers. Once this is accomplished, he can then move on to another village and implement his plan on it.

The Mongrelmen are waiting in ambush for anyone taking the road into town. Of course the player characters will be the first victims. Unless precautions are made, the DM should roll for surprise with a -1 penalty. If the characters are surprised, read the following aloud:

The drizzle which has made your lives miserable lets up a little. Now you can see that the road ahead is as you supposed: one long stretch of boot-sucking mud. Just as the wind picks up a little and starts throwing the drizzle into your face, a guttural shout erupts. You've been ambushed!

If the characters aren't surprised, read:

The drizzle which has made your lives miserable lets up a little. Now you can see that the road ahead is as you supposed: one long stretch of boot-sucking mud. Just as the wind picks up a little and starts throwing the drizzle into your face, you notice something moving. You have only seconds to pull out your weapons once you realize that you're being ambushed!

Ten mongrelmen have been waiting in ambush. Four are on each side of the road, while two come up behind the characters after they pass their hiding spots.

Mongrelmen (10): AC 5; MV 9; HD 2, 1 (x9); hp 15, 8 (x2), 7 (x3), 6 (x2), 5, 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long swords); SD camouflage, mimicry; SZ M (6' tall); ML steady (12); AL LN, XP 65 (2 HD), 35 (1 HD) each.

The mongrelmen will fight as long as they appear to be winning. They attack anyone not wearing armor first, as instructed by their "master" (they do not know him as High Theocrat Renald). If they are losing the battle, they flee deep into the woods, with no goal in sight. Following the fleeing mongrelmen will only help the PCs get lost (the chance of wandering monster encounters is doubled). After the mongrelmen have been defeated or scattered, the PCs can make their way to the village without further incident.

Encounter Two: Happy Jackal Tavern

More than likely, the characters will go to the nearest tavern first. If this is not the case, then the DM will need to modify the encounter.

You finally arrive in the dry and comfortable confines of the Happy Jackal. You come in and are once again assailed by the smells of freshly baked pumpkin pie and bread. Many happy memories of other visits here during Harvest Festival are evoked by the scenes and scents of

Stephen Crowsford

Human Male
8th Level Paladin

STR: 16(18/00*) Ht: 6'2"
DEX: 10 Wt: 215
CON: 11 Age: 30
INT: 6 Hair/Eyes: Br/Blu
WIS: 3 Skin: Neutral
CHR: 17 Alignment: LG

AC Normal: 0 Rear: 0
THAC0: 13 Hit Points: 45

Weapon Proficiences: Battleaxe, Dagger, Heavy crossbow, Lance, Long sword, Two-handed sword

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal Lore, Etiquette, Weaponsmithing

Languages: Common

Magical Items: *gauntlets of ogre power*, helm of brilliance, plate mail +1, two-handed sword +2*

Equipment: heavy crossbow, 20 heavy quarrels, belt pouch.

Stephen was the son of the Valrenwood village Blacksmith/Weaponsmith. He worked hard under his father. However, he just didn't seem to understand the art. That and his adventurous nature that made it nearly impossible to teach him. It was then that he was sent off to the priesthood. Once again he wasn't set for that particular field but made an excellent holy guard. With his new career choice, he began his easy quest—protect the other members of the group and destroy evil.

Stephen has waited far too long for his return visit. While he feels that his sister could have waited a lifetime before seeing his family again, his anticipation has grown to the point of, well, almost bursting. He hasn't seen or heard from his father since he left town several years ago. When they left, his father let them go in a glowering silence. As a result, he believes that his father didn't really approve of his choice of

careers; however, he is sure that his father will approve of the fact that he is now an accomplished warrior with many abilities and achievements to his name. Regardless of where some of Stephen's abilities originate, his father will appreciate and come to approve his son's choice. At least, that's what Stephen believes. Unfortunately, Stephen can tell that his sister is gearing for another father-daughter argument when she arrives. Father probably disapproved of her choice even more than his. After she explodes, Stephen is sure that Father will want to listen to his stories. Even better, Father will enjoy seeing the fine craftsmanship of the weapons and armor that the paladin has found in his many adventures.

Erik Kilton: The mentor in the group. He has helped Stephen's faith and understanding grow. If he were older, he would be considered a father figure; in this case it is just good friends.

Borfuss Ironheld: Now here is a fighter. While not exactly bound by the same charge as Stephen, he is just as good and loyal. His fighting is surely admirable and legendary.

Rhiana Crowsford: Sister dear. She's fine. She just needs to get out more. Dad always said that she has Mom's nagging way. Stephen has to agree since he never knew his mom.

Marcus Ducknell: A cute and amusing sort of fellow. Erik says that he's a thief; Stephen just believes he's seeking attention.

Brittney Toris: A nice lady. Stephen is sure that she's interested in his religion. Her love of nature proves that. If everyone would leave them alone to talk more, Stephen is sure that he could find out her intentions.

the tavern. No one has recognized any of you since your wet hair and silent demeanor has concealed your identities for the moment.

The tavern maid makes her way over to your table where you've chosen to dry off and enjoy supper. She begins to ask for your order when she sudden realizes who you are.

The barmaid strikes up a conversation and keeps it focussed mainly on what the characters have been doing for the last nine years. She avoids any bad news since she believes that the characters have had a hard time and need to tell stories to get them in a better mood. (After all, happy patrons mean better tips!) If the characters persist in trying to find out about the "plague," then the barmaid will assure them that only animals have been affected up until the time the village elder's daughter became sick. After assuring the characters that it doesn't seem to be spreading and that they should warm themselves and eat before trying to find out more about the situation, she will urge them to tell some stories of their travels.

After the characters order their food and find out that everything seems to be mostly fine, another childhood friend of the characters' has also recognized them and heard their voices, which has helped to confirm their identities. This man-at-arms proceeds to quietly leave the tavern to go tell Lt. Nertus of the characters' arrival. Lt. Nertus is in conference with High Theocrat Renald when the man-at-arms arrives with the news. When the characters have finished their food and have a great portion of the tavern enthralled with their stories of high adventure (the DM should allow the players to embellish if using the pregenerated characters), High Theocrat Renald should arrive with acting Captain Nertus in tow. The tavern-goers will quiet considerably and watch as the heroes are asked to take on another quest.

The tavern-goers listening to your tales of high adventure suddenly go quiet. Their eyes go to the door that has just opened. Entering the door is a uniformed man, perhaps the village's captain of the guard. His ruddy face glowers at the crowd as if saying, "Don't mess with me or mine."

The uniformed man steps aside with a bow as another man enters behind him. This man is taller than the uniformed man, yet he has a thinner, more graceful body. He wears a rich, red cassock that has been embellished here and there with designs in gold thread. His dark-haired head is capped off with a red and gold headdress. A smile stretches across his clean-shaven, thin face, lighting up his dark eyes. At a guess, you'd have to say that this is the high theocrat of the province.

High Theocrat Renald graciously greets the adventurers. Lt. Nertus does nothing more than sneer with disgust at what he feels are the overly famous adventurers. The High Theocrat Sucris Renald informs the characters of the plague that has been sweeping the village animals—and more importantly, the village elder's daughter. Read the following aloud or paraphrase after introductions have been made:

"Ah, it is nice to know that adventurers such as you have come to visit our fair village. I should inform you of a few things, though. A plague has swept through the animals of the village. Either the poor animal dies or becomes sick for several hours. At first, we thought that the sickness was limited to the animals, but Elder Dalmon's daughter, Ceria, took sick with the illness about nine days ago. She'll be fine for most of the day, but then, all of a sudden, she'll become as sick as the sheep on Farmer Drugen's farm. We all feel very lucky that she hasn't died suddenly.

"I have been tending the poor girl, but, alas, my treatments have done nothing more than prolong her suffering."

If the characters ask, Renald tells them that she is currently resting in the home of the village elder. He explains that the elder of the village has been very busy with his dying daughter and has left most of the day-to-day business to Renald, the spiritual leader of the village. This information should be presented as matter of fact and does not surprise anyone.

The character's loyalty to the village should suffice to motivate them to help find a cure. However, if the characters are still not willing to help, Renald will offer a small reward of 100 gold pieces for the group and a commission with the church (which should be a great bribe for the cleric in the party).

Neither Renald nor Nertus have any idea of where the characters should start. Each has a different "theory" to keep the characters busy until the two of them are ready to end the village's suffering. Renald suggests that it could be some form of plant that is affecting the animals, but that doesn't explain Ceria's suffering. Nertus darkly suggests that perhaps someone has been poisoning the animals and the daughter. If asked for suspects, he states that the characters should look in a mirror and then huffs into an unhelpful silence.

RANDOM RUMOR CHART

1. Most of the dead livestock was small, so it must be some sort of disease. Probably got some of the people on the outskirts of the village—that's why they are missing. The elder's daughter should be killed before she spreads it to the rest of the village.
2. The theocrat cursed the village when he moved the church inside of the village. He now has left the village unguarded against evil that lurks outside the village. It's his fault because he wanted political gain.
3. It is probably just another rash of bullete attacks. Darn things breed like rats in the forest.
4. Lt. Nertus is from "out of town." He can't be trusted. I'm sure that he killed the captain of the guard to take his place.
5. The druid north of town never liked the fact that the evil in the land had been nearly eradicated. Because he believes in balance, he's probably sending a plague on us all.
6. The sage knows exactly what is happening, that's why he is being so close-lipped about the whole thing. He's even planning on leaving town soon.
7. There is no plague. It's all a conspiracy. (The source of the information won't explain any further.)
8. There is no plague. The livestock just got some bad feed.
9. Perhaps the druid is feeding the livestock and Ceria some bad herbs. Either that or the livestock is getting into some bad plants.
10. Even though he seems nice enough, High Theocrat Renald scares me. Perhaps he's trying to distract Elder Dalmon by making Ceria sick somehow.
11. Some of the sheep on Farmer Drugen's farms recovered but died the next day.
12. Ceria is faking her illness so that she can get more attention from her father and the village. Ever since she's been sick, she receives toys, sweets, and other nice things. She seems fine most of the time.

Borfus Ironheld

Dwarf Male
9th Level Fighter

STR: 15 (20*) Ht: 3'8"
DEX: 14 Wt: 160
CON: 18 Age: 88
INT: 16 Hair/Eyes: Br/Blu
WIS: 16 Skin: Grey
CHR: 10 Alignment: NG

AC Normal: -1 Rear: 2
THAC0: 12 Hit Points: 85

Weapon Proficiences: Dagger, Halberd, Heavy crossbow (specialized), Short sword, Warhammer (specialized)

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blacksmithing (15), Brewing (16), Gaming (10), Stonemasonry (13), Blind-fighting, Mining (13), Survival (16)

Languages: Common, Dwarf

Magical Items: *girdle of giant strength (stone)*, shield +2, warhammer +3, bag of holding* (750 lbs.)

Equipment: field plate, heavy crossbow, 20 heavy quarrels, 10 platinum pieces, 25 gold pieces.

A young dwarf by age, he came to the village seeking adventure. When he met up with the group, he was sure that this would be the one--he has not been disappointed. While not having family in the village of Valrenwood, he has made a few friends before he left with his new adventuring party.

Everyone seems to have family waiting in the village. He doesn't. Not really. The group has been his family since the day he and his fellow companions decided to leave "home." Borfus hopes that everyone isn't ready to retire to Valrenwood just yet. Surely they come only to check on the welfare of loved ones and enjoy the Harvest Festival, and not to roost? The only thing Borfus misses about the village are the drinks at the Happy Jackal Tavern served by his long-time friend Dand. When first entering the village, it

hadn't seemed to be more than a place to stay the night at and then move on. That first night in the tavern, however, proved him wrong. Dand was a kindred spirit. The times when the two of them took off early for some "fishing" until they fell unconscious . . . those were the days. Since Harvest Festival will be commencing not too soon after their arrival, he and Dand should be able to while away the time in their traditional way. Hopefully Dand has forgotten about the ruse that the little thief Marcus pulled over everyone's eyes. If nothing else, the two of them can certainly enjoy making the little beggar's visit unpleasant.

Erik Kilton: A bit too preachy. His strength in his faith has helped the group through many a tough situation—especially those wraiths you ran into a couple months earlier.

Stephen Crowsford: A nice kid. A bit big, and a little dense for his liking. At least the two of them haven't had any arguements.

Rhiana Crowsford: This brat needs a spanking.

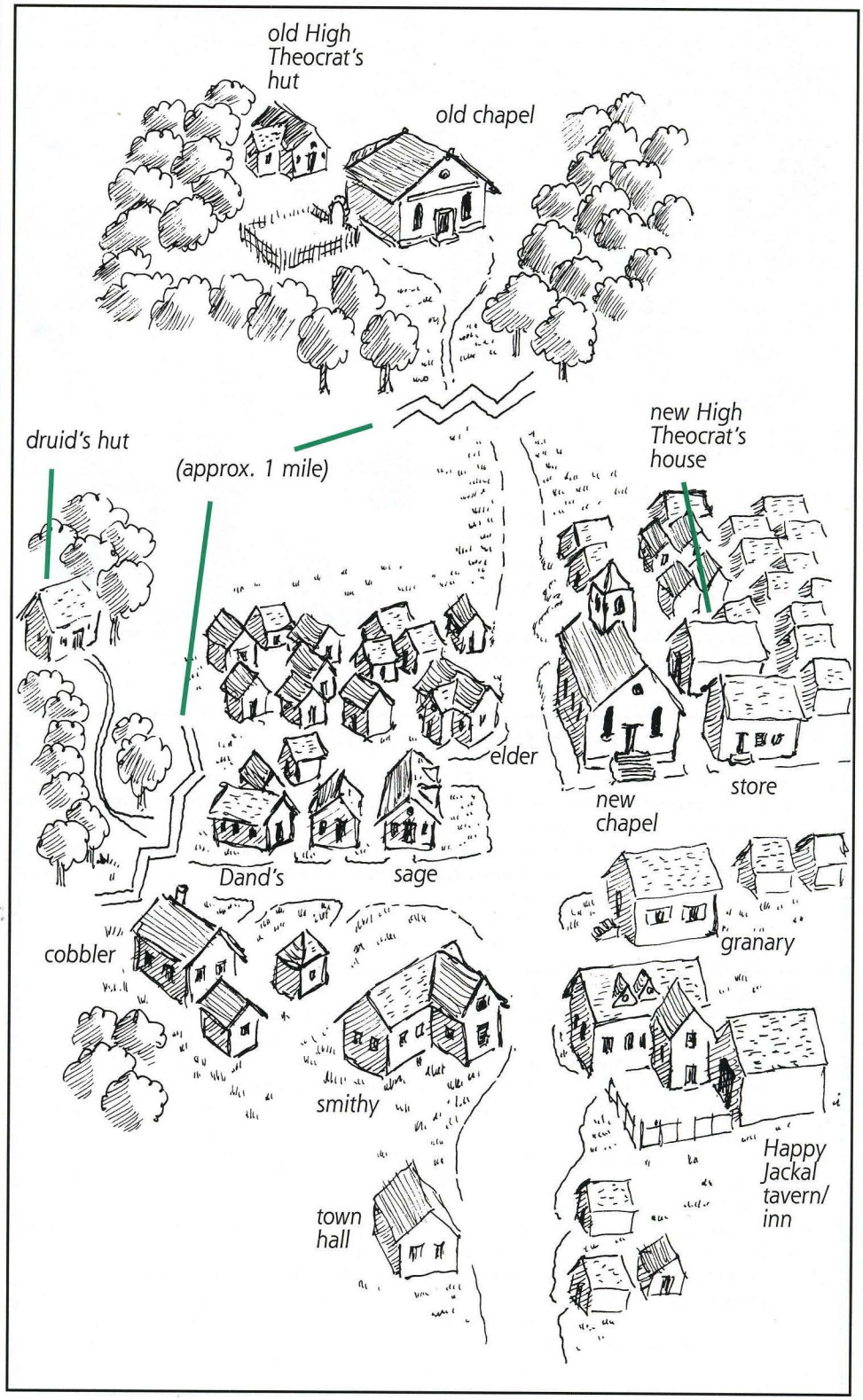
Marcus Ducknell: A fine cook. As long as he keeps those thieving hands to himself, everything will be just fine.

Brittney Toris: A nice girl, for an elf that is. She and Stephen seem rather caught up with one another. Giving her a wide berth seems like an excellent idea.

Encounter Three: Out and About the Village

For players who aren't using the pregenerated characters, this section is a red herring for the characters. If the pregenerated characters are being used, then this section is perfect for family/friends interaction that the players wish to have the characters partake in. Even though there is nothing truly productive in the search of the village (and visitation of family members), the characters may find some important clues. If the players begin to grow restless, the DM should feel free to go immediately to the next section.

As the characters question the people who live in the village, use the Random



map by Dave Sutherland

Rumor table (pg 15)to give them information. Mix the innuendo and false information with the real clues.

The Smithy:

When one or both of the Crowsfords visit their home, read the following aloud:

A tall, muscular man in his late forties busily works on an anvil, hammering out a horseshoe. Working the bellows is a grimy young woman with ashen smudges on her face and her hair pulled back tightly. Despite her efforts at taming her hair, some of it has fallen into her face. When she sees you enter, she yells "Master Terren!" over the clang of his tools.

After introducing Lilion, a niece of his and cousin of theirs, Terren hugs both of his children. As expected, Stephen is accepted with only a minimum of restraint. He and his father can talk over past escapades and interesting weapons however long Stephen allows it. Rhiana will have a harder time garnering any attention. Once the initial roleplaying peters out and the questions about plagues and other events begin, the PCs can find out about rumors 2, 4, 6, and 11 from Terren. If they ask Lilion anything, she mutters about rumors 1, 5, 9, and 12.

Dand's House:

If the PCs visit Dand in his house, read the following aloud:

The small hut that Dand lives in is well-kept and decorated for the Harvest Festival. A handsome woman in her mid-thirties is on the stoop, sweeping dust away with her straw broom.

This is Dand's wife, Merta. When approached by the PCs, she will politely take them inside the hut and call out for Dand. He enters shortly from another room that is filled with the sounds of children's chattering. If Borfus is present, then Dand will great him heartily. Should Marcus be there, Dand is a little more restrained in greeting him. After seeing Marcus, he whispers something in his wife's ear. Merta keeps a keen eye on the halfling after this.

If the characters ask about the plague, then they find out rumors 3, 7, and 10.

The New Village Sage:

The village sage's hut is also decorated with Harvest Festival decorations. The orange and yellow decorations seem somewhat more orderly to Rhiana's eyes (if present), then in years past. Once the PCs knock on the door, read the following aloud:

The door opens and before you stands a man wearing the robes of the village sage. "Why, hello! I'm Fredrick Napal, the acting sage for this fine village of Valrenwood. May I help you?" He sweeps his arm inward in a grand gesture, clearly inviting you in.

Once inside, Fredrick offers the PCs some hot cider. Should the PCs look around, they see that everything is extremely neat and tidy. However, (if Rhiana is present) none of the drying herbs that once hung in the back of the hut near the stove are present.

If asked about the former sage, Fredrick tells the PCs a story about how the old sage went missing a few days ago and how he has valiantly stepped forward to take the old sage's place until he is found. If someone thinks to ask what his profession was before becoming the acting sage, Fredrick will only say that he wandered near and far in search of

Rhiana Crowsford

Human Female
9th Level Mage

STR:	9	Ht:	5'8"
DEX:	12	Wt:	122
CON:	14	Age:	29
INT:	17	Hair/Eyes:	R/Blu
WIS:	12	Skin:	Very Fair
CHR:	14	Alignment:	CG

AC Normal: 2 Rear: 3
THAC0: 18 Hit Points: 29

Weapon Proficiences: Dart, Quarterstaff

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Reading/Writing (18), Spellcraft (15), Swimming (9), Herbalism (15), Weaponsmithing (14)

Languages: Ancient, Common, Goblin, Hobgoblin

Magical Items: *bracers of defense AC4, ring of protection +2, quarterstaff +2, wand of frost* (37 charges)

Equipment: spell book, 20 gold pieces.

The sister to Stephen, Rhiana has always felt that she had to show him up—especially when her father seemed to spend so much time with him when her brother was growing up. However, since she didn't have the brawn to become a blacksmith, she decided to go the scholarly path and become a mage. For a while, her family was so thrilled. However, once her brother became a paladin, she slid out of the family's focus again. Well, that meant that she'd have to work harder.

Surely this visit home won't be that bad, Rhiana hopes. Since her brother will most likely keep her father busy, Rhiana can slip away from the "family reunion" to check in on her old mentor—the village sage. If she can't get away, Rhiana is sure that hearing her brother's stories yet another time will make her explode from boredom, not to mention the lecture that she will most likely receive from her father. Already, she can hear his words about how

"unsuitable" it is for a daughter of his to... well, enough of that. Of course, the sage will be proud to see her progress in the art. He may also have some knowledge about creatures that troubled her companions during their many quests. On a somber note, though, Rhiana hopes that rumors that she has heard about the sage's death, as well as those of the plague striking Valrenwood, are false. If they are true, now is her chance to either assume the vacant post and get to work helping the village or to meet the new sage and offer her advice and help to him or her. She may even have the chance to gain favor with this powerful mage and fill her spellbook at the same time.

Erik Kilton: He preaches overly much. If he stopped trying to convert her, she might enjoy his company better.

Stephen Crowsford: Her brother is so sweet, but she almost can't stand him at times. People automatically look up to him whereas she has to earn everyone's respect. One of these days the boy is going to get into trouble because of his simple ideas!

Borfuss Ironheld: He seems too much like Father. It's best to avoid him.

Marcus Ducknell: He naught but a lowly thief. It is necessary to watch one's back (and pouch) when he's around.

Brittney Toris: She's a country bumpkin. She's not near good enough for Stephen, even though half the party seems to want the two of them to get together!

enlightenment. He refuses to come out and say that he isn't a mage of any sort, but the characters can easily deduce this if they keep asking enough questions. He can also tell them rumors 4, 8, 10, and 11, and refutes rumor 6. After all, by staying in town, he has a chance to earn a constant, stationary living! He can also mention rumor 7 as something that he has heard someone say (he won't admit his inability to remember who said it).

Encounter Four: A Visit to the Elder

At some point during their search, the characters are sure to want to talk to the village elder. After being granted an audience, the characters can briefly speak with Elder Dalmon—Renald is currently treating the young girl.

Entering the small chamber is the village elder known to you as Dalmon. When you had first left the village, he was the son of the old village elder—a young upstart (compared to his ancient father) who had just wed again after losing his first wife several years before and was anxiously waiting to take his place as the ruler. So much as changed.

He enters the room. He looks much older, and carries an air of remorse and doubt—the sacrifices of the current office, perhaps. He greets your party as the old friends you are, all the while looking over his shoulder towards the room he just left.

Dalmon answers any questions as best he can. His answers will be distracted and short because he awaits some word about the current treatment that High Theocrat Renald is administering to his daughter. His leadership skills are obviously crippled by the threat of losing his daughter. He can tell the party the following information:

- The livestock of the village has been suffering from a hidden killer. No visible marks can be found; it's almost as if the village has been cursed.
- Only his daughter ails from a similar affliction to those suffered by the animals. She has been kept alive by High Theocrat Renald.
- Some of the villagers on the outskirts of the north part of town are missing.
- A search party was organized by the captain of the guard. He is now missing and presumed dead. Lt. Nertus is the acting captain until a body is found.
- Renald and Dalmon have been taking turns ruling the village. However, since his daughter seems to respond to her father's love, High Theocrat Renald has been taking more and more responsibility.

The elder deflects any sort of doubt about High Theocrat Renald since he is the one keeping his daughter alive. He suggests that the Lt. Nertus can be rude at times but seems to be a very good protector. After all, High Theocrat Renald personally suggested him to replace the captain of the guard.

Should the characters wish to investigate the Theocrat in action, Elder Dalmon will be more than accommodating. However, upon reaching the room with Ceria, High Theocrat Renald ushers, nearly forcibly, everyone out of the room. The characters are allowed to look over the girl if they force the issue. The girl is

young and very sickly looking. She has been given a dose of the venom potion that Renald has prepared that will make her a histachii yuan-ti. Renald formulated his venom in such a way so that the transformation is "put on hold" until the attack is ready.

The only other interesting thing that the characters may find in the room is the mixture that the clergyman has been giving her. A successful Herbalism proficiency check enables characters to identify some of the unique herbs in the mixture. However, the suspension (yuan-ti venom) can't be identified. The Theocrat warns them that the potion is best not sampled by healthy people and that the herbs were retrieved by the hermit druid east of the village. However, he will not stop foolhardy characters from trying the mixture. (Refer to the Yuan-ti, Histachii in the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome.)

ENCOUNTER FIVE: TO CATCH A HERMIT

The characters may want to visit the hermit and ask questions about the herbs he places in Ceria's potion or even about the rumors centered around him. Directions to his hut can be garnered easily enough from anyone in the village. However, they will be a little late. Since High Theocrat Renald has all the herbs and roots he needs, he has dispatched six of his newly-created histachii to kill the druid. The characters arrive in time to see these abominations leaving. Some will still be wearing the tattered clothing of the missing villagers. The DM may need to adapt this encounter if the characters have not visited the village elder.

You follow the trail that you were told about easily enough. After a short walk, you come across a small hut crowded by woods and several different gardens.

It appears as if the druid has guests. From this distance you notice several humanoid figures exiting the door of the hut. They seem to be proceeding north.

The action of the characters determines how this scene progresses. The histachii were under orders to kill the druid and get rid of connections between the yuan-ti and the priesthood. Now that this has

Marcus Ducknell

Halfling Male
9th Level Thief

STR:	9	Ht:	3'5"
DEX:	17	Wt:	63
CON:	10	Age:	36
INT:	12	Hair/Eyes:	Br/Hz
WIS:	14	Skin:	Tan
CHR:	14	Alignment:	NN

AC Normal: 3 Rear: 3
THAC0: 16 Hit Points: 32

Weapon Proficiences: Club, Dagger Sap, Short sword

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Appraising (12), Cooking (12), Forgery (17), Blingfighting, Reading Lips (15)

Languages: Halfling, Common

Magical Items: *dagger +1, dagger of throwing +1, short sword +1, hide armor of blending.*

Equipment: 50' silk rope, 40 gold pieces.

Ever since he joined up with this group many years ago in Valrenwood, the pickings have never been better. The people in the group have been nice, too. They go visit interesting places. Sometimes they do silly things like walk down trapped corridors without asking for help disarming the traps, but Marcus overlooks that. They just have to learn from their mistakes!

Okay, maybe he left Valrenwood under forced haste. He didn't mean any any harm. Granted, he used the fact that some halflings (like him) happen to look like human children... and he may have taken advantage of a few wealthy merchants. Yeah, he was presumed (and so assumed himself) to be a young stableboy orphan, but that was when Marcus was young and naive. After a few years of thinking that he was a young human boy, he found out about halflings and the fact that he was one. Once that was discovered, it wasn't his fault if he neglected

to tell anyone else in the village. And if he used some of the skills that his one-day mentor taught him after telling him his heritage, could anyone blame him? After leaving Valrenwood with the group, Marcus learned from other halflings about whose pockets deserved to be lightened, when not to steal (this is very important), and where to pick up that extra bit of coinage. He won't make any mistakes regarding those particulars ever again. Getting caught once, or actually twice (or was it three times?) was enough. Marcus is sure that old Dand has forgotten the whole merchant thing. Unless the dwarf's threats are true. Then he may just want to consider shaving the hair off his feet himself. He'd hate to be hung up by it.

Erik Kilton: Although he talks a lot (especially around him), he seems to be a nice guy. He's pulled the group out of some pretty bad situations.

Stephen Crowsford: Ah, the paladin. He tends to look before he leaps, but he's okay.

Borfuss Ironheld: He's a dwarf. Other than that, he's fine to be around.

Rhiana Crowsford: She tends to envy her brother too much. If she could get over that, she'd be even more fun to be around.

Brittney Toris: She knows a lot about the woods, but then she's a ranger. If she could only be a little more comfortable in places larger than this village, she'd be perfect.

been accomplished, they are on their way to the abandoned chapel north of town. If the characters decide to check out the hut before following the histachii, they will lose the trail and be unable to follow the exact route of the creatures unless they have a good ranger with them.

If the characters make their presence known, the histachii will attack and fight to the death (their masters will not accept it if they willingly allow the characters to follow them back to the chapel).

Yuan-ti, histachii (6): AC 8; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 15, 14, 11, 8, 6, 4; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-3; SA berserk; SD immune to hold and charm spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML average (10); AL CE, XP 120 each.

All but two of the histachii have used their berserk ability (+2 bonus to attack rolls for 2d6 rounds). These two will be the first into the fray.

Inside the hut, the characters find the dead body of the druid. The druid unwittingly assisted in High Theocrat Renald's plan by thinking that the herbs he collected for the theocrat could help Ceria. The druid is currently armed with a magical staff (+1/ +2 vs. reptiles), and bracers +3. He is beyond help since the histachii killed and dismembered him, keeping some as snacks for the trip home.

Nothing else inside the hut would be of interest—the druid was waiting for later in the season before picking the herbs currently growing in the garden. Characters with the Herbalism skill can identify all sorts of unique herbs that can be found in the fall and in this region (DM discretion).

At this point, the characters may continue to the north and to the chapel (Encounter Seven) or they return to the village (Encounter Six).

Encounter Six: A Monster Ambush

Shortly after the characters departed the village, High Theocrat Renald gave Ceria the final dose of potion. She made her transformation into a histachii in record, but painful, time. The first victim of this new abomination was the village elder. Currently, the histachii once known as Ceria is enjoying that feast. Soon it will run an ambush in the village until it hears the call of the yuan-ti masters and runs to the north.

Yuan-ti, histachii (Ceria): AC 8; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 4; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-3; SA berserk; SD immune to hold and charm spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML average (10); AL CE, XP 120.

The characters should get no indication that anything is wrong in the village. The only things happening are that the villagers know that the elder is "with his daughter," the captain of the guard is at the tavern, and High Theocrat Renald was "around here somewhere." From this point on, Renald has left for the chapel to prepare his invasion. He doesn't want to hurt the villagers, just collect them and make them into histachii.

Encounter Seven: First Line of Defense

Regardless of the characters' choice of actions, High Theocrat Renald has made his way, secretly, back to his old chapel to prepare his attack and to see how the brood of yuan-ti are doing. If the characters have figured out the situation or realize that something is coming from the north of the village, then this is the encounter to run.

This encounter takes place just outside the perimeter of the abandoned chapel. The yuan-ti have created several more mongrelmen to act as sentries. These sentries will attack anyone on sight (except for those known as friends—yuan-ti, histachii, and High Theocrat Renald). If acting Captain Nertus comes along, they will attack him. The acting Captain Nertus doesn't know about the full plot. He just wanted to become the captain of the guard.

The mongrelmen are encountered in groups of four. Once a fight starts, one of the remaining six groups will show up every round to help.

Mongrelmen (4x7groups--28 total): AC 5; MV 9; HD 1 (28); hp 8 (x2), 7 (x3), 6 (x2), 5 (x10), 4 (x11); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short swords); SD camouflage, mimicry; SZ M (6' tall); ML steady (12); AL LN, XP 35 each.

Should the combat last longer than four rounds, there is a 2 in 10 chance that the creatures in the chapel encounters will become aware of the unwanted guests.

Encounter Eight: The Chapel Proper

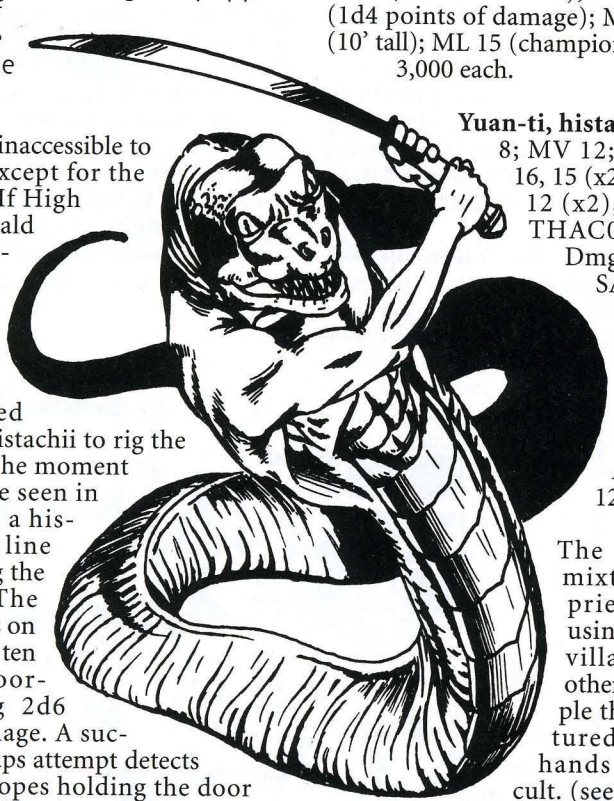
The following encounters will take place once the characters get to the chapel proper. The chapel itself is something similar to gothic in style. The only true entrance is through the front doors. The "windows" are little more than slits with different types of glass, designed to act as a sort of castle structure to repel small assaults. The chapel is built from granite blocks with pillars made of polished stone.

Once the characters have reached the

chapel, or are in sight of it, read the following:

Before you lies the chapel that you once attended as children. Once majestic and grand, it is now an eyesore. The forest has begun to retake most of the surrounding aread, as well.

There appears to be no movement near the chapel proper. An eerie silence lies over the area. No lights or other signs of life can be found. The large oaken doors that stand nearly 12 feet tall stand open. One door is barely attached to the wall; the banding has popped because of the extreme warping of the wood.



The chapel is inaccessible to the outside except for the front doors. If High Theocrat Renald arrived knowing that the characters were on his heels (or soon will be), he dispatched some of the histachii to rig the door to fall. The moment anyone can be seen in the doorway, a histachii cuts a line that is holding the door up. The huge door falls on anyone within ten feet of the doorway, causing 2d6 points of damage. A successful find traps attempt detects the series of ropes holding the door up. However, there is a 30% chance that the histachii will notice any thief checking the door for the trap.

If the evil beings in the chapel didn't know that something was coming, they will after the two doors fall.

Encounter Nine Showdown

This encounter could be very different depending on the set-up and whether or not all of the characters are here. A DM may have to adjust the italicized text to suit what and who is here.

You enter what was once hallowed ground. It is now the sight of great evil. Most of the trappings of the chapel have been stripped—ropes on the walls that once hung tapestries now hang empty. There are a few pews, but those remaining are stacked out of the way.

In a fit of deja-vu, you notice that a ceremony of sorts is taking place. A humanoid in a flowing, hooded red robe stands on the dais raising a bowl above his head. His chanting stops abruptly as he realizes that there are intruders. Flanking the priest are two large snakelike creatures--each wielding large halberds. Among the congregation are several creatures much like the ones you saw at the home of the druid. It would appear that you have interrupted a ceremony.

Yuan-ti (2): AC 0; MV 12, slither 9; HD 9; hp 42, 41; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1d10 (halberd or bite); SA constriction (1d4 points of damage); MR 20%; SZ L (10' tall); ML 15 (champion); AL CE, XP 3,000 each.

Yuan-ti, histachii (12): AC 8; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 16, 15 (x2), 14, 13 (x2), 12 (x2), 11, 10, 8, 4; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-3; SA berserk; SD immune to hold and charm spells; SZ M (6' tall); ML average (10); AL CE, XP 120 each.

The bowl is the mixture that the priest has been using against the villagers and other hapless people that have ventured into the hands of this evil cult. (see MM pg. 370 for details).

The treasures that High Theocrat Renald has acquired can be found behind the alter in a utility cabinet. Inside the cabinet is a pouch containing 25 pp, 200 gp, 50 sp, and 35 cp. Two golden candlestick holders (50 gp each) and a gold platter (75 gp) can be found also. Magical treasure can be found only in the breeding room.

Some of the stairs of the dais are loose and can be removed. If this is done, the characters will notice that there is a earthen tunnel proceeding down. This hidden passage is extremely hard to find.

Encounter Ten: Hidden Secrets

This is the room that the yuan-ti have been using to raise the twelve nearly ready eggs that will bring a new reign of terror to the region. From these eggs will burst yuan-ti abominations. Several

Brittney Toris

Female Half-Elf
9th Level Ranger

STR: *17(18/00) Ht: 5'6"
DEX: 14 Wt: 107
CON: 14 Age: 45
INT: 16 Hair/Eyes: Br/Gr
WIS: 14 Skin: Painted
CHR: 18 Alignment: LG

AC Normal: 1 Rear: 1
THAC0: 12 Hit Points: 42

Weapon Proficiences: Bastard sword, Broad sword, Dagger, Knife, Long bow, Long sword, Two-handed sword

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Tracking (14), Animal Lore (16), Bowyer (13), Fire-building, Gaming (18), Hunting (13), Set Snares (13), Endurance (14), Survival (16)

Languages: Common, Gnome

Magical Items: *banded mail +3, gauntlets of ogre power*, boots of speed, long sword +3*

Equipment: short sword, 20 gold pieces

After growing up in the forest that used to surround Valrenwood, Brittney finds it hard to visit cities or even dungeons. She does it for that very reason, though. Now that she's returning to Valrenwood, she's almost afraid of what she might find. She's heard that it is growing. Growth generally means expansion. Expansion means forests are cut. She isn't sure that she really wants to see what has happened to the area. However, she must face this. Seeing her relatives would have made this situation a little bit better, but they moved further away, from what her cousin has told her.

Surely the damage to the forest won't be as bad as is often the case with progress. At least, that's what Britteny hopes. Sometimes she has nightmares about groaning trees, rampaging bears, and chittering

squirrels; all of them are berating her for abandoning them. When she wakes up the next morning, though, she remembers that her mentor is in the forest to help prevent any unnecessary deforestation. This usually calms her down enough to focus on the day's activities. Speaking of activities and mentors, Britteny is truly excited about visiting her old stomping grounds. Perhaps she may even get the chance to visit the happy hermit, as she once called him. Greyroot didn't like to be disturbed unannounced, though. He certainly wouldn't make his way to the village for Harvest Festival (too many people)! After she arrives in Valrenwood and a couple of days pass, she is sure that the woodland animals will inform him that she has returned. Then she may go and visit, but she certainly doesn't want to make the druid upset . . . that's nearly a cardinal sin in the forest world. It's hard to tell what side of the coin (or temper) eremitic druids'll be on at any given time.

Erik Kilton: He's a friendly guy, but he pushes his religion too much. Sometimes it would be nice if he would talk about something other than religion.
Stephen Crowsford: He's friendly enough too, but Erik should concentrate his preaching around Stephen a little more than the rest of the group. He needs the help.
Borfuss Ironheld: He's a dwarf. Too bad. Does the party really need a dwarf? Wouldn't a human swordfighter be a better addition to the party? Although, he has helped in many situations . . . .
Rhiana Crowsford: She's nice enough, but she needs to calm down a little and look at herself. She has a lot of potential, but she has also achieved so much and doesn't realize it yet.
Marcus Ducknell: He's in the party? Ignoring him is the best policy.

cages filled with robins and other ordinary birds are along the wall. Guarding the eggs is the female.

The scene before you is one that will haunt your nightmares for a long time to come. Around you is a spacious cellar. Your movements have caused a cacophony of fluttering sounds along the walls. Cages filled with several varieties of birds line all the walls--and all of the birds are native to the region. In the center of the room is a large yuan-ti, which has noticed your arrival. As it rises to attack, you notice nestled on the far wall, lying amongst some straw, at least a dozen eggs.

Yuan-ti: AC 0; MV 12, slither 9; HD 9; hp 68; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6 (snake arm bite); SA constriction (1d4 points of damage); MR 20%; SZ L (10' tall); ML 15 (champion); AL CE, XP 3,000.

The room is 20 feet by 20 feet, but with the cages suspended from the ceilings, it is a bit smaller (although the cages clear the floor by three feet). The yuan-ti will fight to the death to protect the eggs. To aid in the defense, the bottom of the stairs is surrounded with ordinary sticks buried in straw; she will use sticks to snakes against the characters. However, should the eggs be destroyed, she will quickly retreat, realizing that the cause has been lost.

Conclusion

The characters should be praised for saving the village during the Harvest Festival. The acting Captain, Nertus, will still be resentful (if he is still alive), but he won't want to anger the party since it was well-known that he and High Theocrat Renald were good friends. During the festival, the characters will also be hosting the wake for those lost against the evil.

If the characters don't find the secret cellar, the renewed threat will take place in about another year. Until that time, only livestock will be missed. This could easily lead into a longer campaign. ❑

THE DAY OF GRACE

SIGIL'S NEW YEAR HOLIDAY

by Monte Cook

It was a long time ago now, though there's not a single blood in the Cage that knows exactly how long. See, even in times before folks can remember much, there was Sigil. And so, of course, the Lady was its heart. Things back then, a body might imagine, weren't all that different than they were yesterday or will be tomorrow.

Now, the chant is that one day—much like any other to most folks—a little girl approached the Lady of Pain. 'Course, a body might say at this point that he doesn't want to hear a sad tale, but that's the dark of it. It ain't a sob story. The child walked right up to the Lady and gave her a smile that'd melt a tanar'ri's cold heart. Now, any addle-cove can see that there's not a barmier action to take here in the City of Doors, but that's what happened. And it gets better. Supposedly, the child said something to the Lady herself. Nobody knows exactly what the girl said—though plenty of bashers claim to—but it affected the Lady somehow.

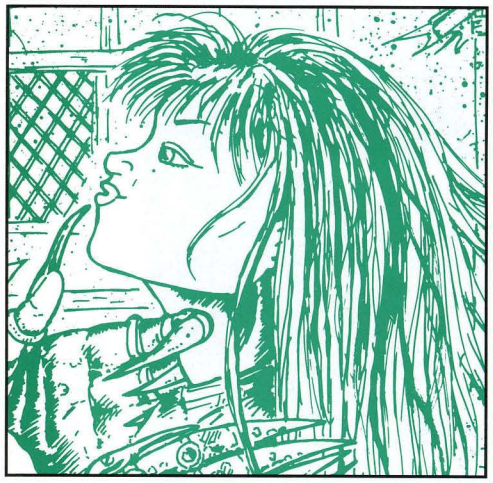
Or maybe it didn't. Maybe the Lady didn't even notice the girl. But the truth is, the Lady of Pain, known by every sod in Sigil as the quickest path to the dead-book that a body can find, went right on by. The girl was spared. The Lady (it seems) showed her grace.

No one knows what became of the little girl—though plenty of bashers claim to—but the story's effects are the same. People throughout the Cage were so moved by this tale that they set up a holiday—a remembrance day, they call it—for, if the Lady showed grace on that day, then all folks in Sigil should too. Who's going to contradict her actions? The day was called Grace, to be celebrated on the first day of Sigil's year (at least that's how the Guvners see it). To this day, Grace is observed by law and tradition throughout the city.

Everyone shows grace, mercy and forgiveness on this remembrance day, because the Lady did. There are no public executions that day. No floggings or similar punishments are conducted. Folks forgive those who wrong them and spare berks who commit addle-coved mistakes.

Now, that doesn't mean that everyone in town is sweet and kind. Grace doesn't entail that, necessarily. People interpret things their own way. It also doesn't mean that everyone adheres to the rules for the holiday (though the Harmonium, as well as many others, are particularly hard on those who don't). Nonetheless, most Cagers believe that a body risks the wrath of the Lady herself if he doesn't. While this might not be supported by evidence, it's a good story for parents to tell their children, and the threat of the Lady is enough to make even adults consider their actions.

Some bashers have their own special take on the Day of Grace. A few generous sods forgive debts on this day, although these are usually minor loans or favors. The Athar make quite a fuss over this day, since it shows, according to them, that grace doesn't come from the powers, but from mortals. Likewise, the Bleakers like to use the day to demonstrate that the only meaning that exists comes from individual action. Some Believers consider the day a worthy "test," while some of the Fated consider it quite a challenge. See, the concepts of grace and mercy don't come easily to them, but many adhere to the day's philosophy at least as a pretext.



Likewise, the Doomguard and Mercykillers have a great difficulty with the idea of showing grace. The Dustmen, the Ciphers, the Indeps, and the Signers are usually too preoccupied with other concerns to pay much attention to the holiday, but, chant has it, the Anarchists make a point not to have their plots and schemes come to fruition on the Day of Grace. The Harmonium and the Fraternity of Order, of course, heed the rules of the Day of Grace. Every year, the Society of Sensation attempts to think of new ways to show mercy or grace, since they tire quickly of repetition. But nobody's been able to figure out if the Xaositects, on the whole, abide by the rules of the day or not.

A parade passes through The Lady's Ward sponsored by the Harmonium at first light on the day each year. Though this began as a festive event, it has since become a military exercise. Many merchants have yearly sales and discounts on the holiday, so plenty of cutters use this as an excuse to purchase gifts for their friends—such niceties are not a fundamental part of the Day of Grace, however. It's simply a day in which all Cagers pause before resorting to violence or vengeance.

Winter Fantasy 98™

February 26—March 1, 1998

Ramada Plaza Hotel O'Hare

Chicago, IL

What is WINTER FANTASY?

WINTER FANTASY is one of the oldest role-playing conventions in the country, and the only event which Network members feel is "their own convention."

What makes it so special?

The folks like you who attend. No, really! Most of the members coming to WINTER FANTASY run their own games and conventions. This event provides these important decision-makers the opportunity to see the latest games, playtest pre-release products, and learn tips and tricks from designers, editors, and artists from over a dozen game manufacturers.

And this costs an arm and a leg, right?

Not really. The Ramada is giving us special rates of $85 per night for up to quad rooms, so bring along some friends to spread the cost around. Call the hotel at 847-827-5131 to make reservations. Call before February 13th to be assured of this rate.

Pre-reg admission is $30, and if you judge four slots you can get in for FREE. Plus, there will be some product given away and lots of prizes for events.

Isn't Chicago really cold in February?

Not as cold as it is in January...

For those of you who've attended the RPGA® Network's WINTER FANTASY™ conventions in the past, this year's event will be a quantum leap above anything you've yet encountered. For those of you who've never attended, this is the convention event you will not want to miss!

In addition to providing excitement for our LIVING™ setting afficionados, this year's convention features events tailored to those DMs who like to try something new, learn something different, and schmooze with an influential mix of game designers, convention organizers, gamemasters, artists, and club presidents from across North America.

The Schedule

This year's programming schedule is designed to entertain and enlighten that very assemblage of intelligent, insightful individuals.

We've added two-hour breaks (and an extra hour food break) between game slots so that every attendee has the opportunity to get involved with seminars, play new game demonstrations, and visit the exhibit hall to get the latest products from TSR and other game companies.

Seminars

The centerpiece of our seminar series this year is our new Judge Training Program. Through this program, members can learn how to judge Network events better, and (we hope) pick up some tips for their home campaigns as well. The training consists of seminars and assigned judging slots. The assigned judging sessions will be monitored by one of our teachers, and in a short debrief session the monitor will provide helpful suggestions for improvement.

Once you have completed the courses and judging sessions, you will receive a certificate and Service Points. Further, you will be able to take the courses and give them to others in your locality who could not attend the WINTER FANTASY Show.

Curriculum

Judging 101 –

This seminar is on the basics of judging Network events. Though AD&D will frequently be used as a model, the seminar is primarily focused towards what makes a good judge, how to bring life and interest to NPCs, how to run scenes with drama and excitement, how to handle difficult players, and so forth. Two hours. This is a primary class, and you must agree to judge 3 sessions at the WINTER FANTASY Show when registering.

LIVING CITY™ –

This seminar will cover the specifics and peculiarities of RPGA's most popular LIVING™ campaign. Disucssion will include both out-of-game and in-game topics: preparation for judging an event, AD&D rules used and resources for interpretations, common interpretations applicable to everyone, awarding treasure and experience, application of laws in the campaign, spells and magic, and more! Lots of handouts and cool prizes will be on hand! Two hours. This is an elective class. REQ - Judging 101 and judging at least one session of LIVING CITY events at the WINTER FANTASY Show (can be part of 3 slots required for Judging 101).

We also planning elective seminars on *Threads of Legend*, *Virtual Seattle*, the ALTERNITY® game, and others as we can add them. One hour each, probably.

Tournament & *Polyhedron* Writing 101 –
This seminar focuses not on how to write an adventure or article, but how to get it considered and accepted. Topics include "what we are looking for in submissions," formatting, electronic submission, and related issues. Your good ideas will only see print in the Network if you can get us to like them, and attending this seminar will give you a leg up. One hour.

LIVING CITY Q&A –
Not part of the judging series, this seminar is focused at players. We will endeavor to answer all questions about the campaign and its many oddities. One hour.

Running a LIVING CITY Interactive –
Dan Donnelly and others will work through the process of creating a good interactive with attendees, who will plan and run the LIVING CITY interactive scheduled for Saturday night. Bring some creativity and a little sweat. Two one-hour segments.

LIVING DEATH™ Judge #1
The first of two seminars to focus on the LIVING DEATH campaign, this one provides information on judging issues, rules usage, and handling the unexpected. A must for all LIVING DEATH judges.

LIVING DEATH Judge #2
Our second LIVING DEATH judge seminar focuses on the Gothic Earth setting, tips for creating mood and setting tone, and adding little extras which will make your LIVING DEATH tables even better.

Special Events

This year features a special LIVING CITY event only for judges at the convention, which will occur Sunday morning. To qualify, you must judge two slots of LIVING CITY and two slots of anything else (at least one slot has to be something besides LIVING CITY). Entry is based on slots judged (or released due to lack of players). You don't have to sign up for the event. We will post a list of those who qualify on Saturday just after the 9:00 PM slot begins. If you are on the list you can just show up. If you want to judge this game at the convention, then keep the Thursday night slot (2) free to play in the Slot Zero.

TSR is planning a huge pre-launch of the ALTERNITY game, including a new tournament, seminars, and other activities. Alternity is a futuristic role-playing game which can be used for many genres of sci-fi gaming. The RPGA will be involved in the development of part of the first campaign setting for this new game, STAR*DRIVE™.

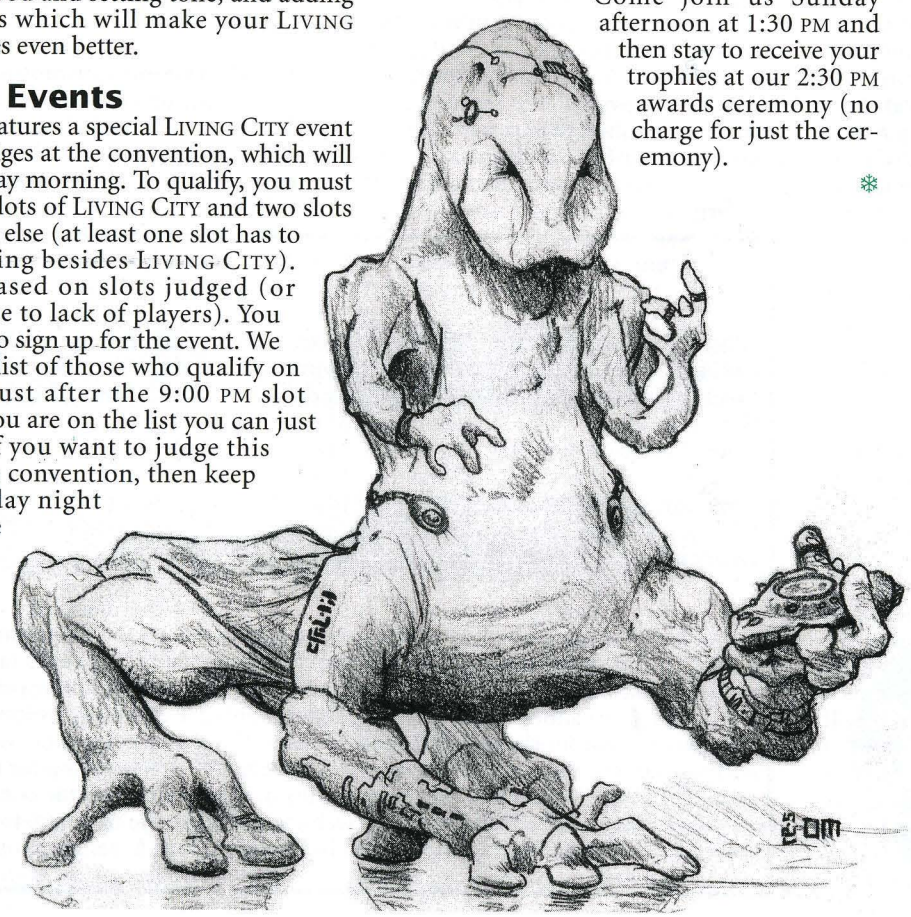
There will also be previews of the new **Marvel Super Heroes™** game, which is scheduled for release in the summer. Try the game out; we're sure you'll like it. Jeff and Robert are both big super hero game buffs, so you can expect to see much more of this game as soon as it hits the shelves.

You can get your fill of LIVING campaign events at WINTER FANTASY. We have three LIVING CITY events, two LIVING DEATH events, a LIVING JUNGLE™ event, and a *Virtual Seattle* event. However, there are lots of other things to do. Try Earthdawn, or Men in Black, or play Star Wars and bring a character from your home campaign. Compete in our Teams Challenge, a two-round AD&D event which is part of the annual Network Club Decathlon.

Awards Ceremony

After all this fun and excitement, it's only proper that we conclude the whole shebang with a banquet where we share the good time we had. And do we have a banquet for you!

Come join us Sunday afternoon at 1:30 PM and then stay to receive your trophies at our 2:30 PM awards ceremony (no charge for just the ceremony).



Presented by

ANDON UNLIMITED™

Additional Exciting Events

Magic: The Gathering® Pro Tour New York Qualifier

ALTERNITY™ Pre-Launch

New Marvel Super Heroes™ Game Preview

...and more games than you can shake a stick at!

Call 1-800-529-EXPO for more Info

© Copyright 1997, Andon. Marvel Super Heroes is a registered trademark of Marvel Entertainment. Alternity, Winter Fantasy, and RPGA are trademarks of TSR, Inc. Andon, and Magic: The Gathering are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Decath[10]n

Once again, we present the Network Clubs annual Decathlon, a year-long competition among Network Clubs for fame and prizes.

Last year's competition was plagued by the same difficulties that plagued the rest of the Network programs, but this year we at HQ make a renewed commitment to you to publish standings in a timely manner and to remind you of upcoming deadlines sooner. To facilitate this, we are adding some functions to our new database which allow you to view the current standings on the RPGA website whenever you want, with updates posting from tournament events as soon as the scoring data is processed. We will also run regular updates in *Polyhedron*. We hope that you, in turn, will make a renewed commitment to participate, because the competition is really exciting when lots of clubs vie for the top spot.

The ten events this year have been condensed from a lot of choices in each category down to three Service events, three Writing events, and Tournament Play. We did this partly to simplify the entry process and the whole decathlon, and partly to emphasize group participation in events rather than individual participation. This approach means that we have simplified the process of entering the various events, as you will see below. The past few decathlons were a bit heavy on the paperwork, which is not a good thing. For this year's competition, there are four events for which you do not have to submit any paperwork at all! We are also making it easy to enter an event via our website (`www.tsr.com/rpga`), and adjusting the deadlines for entry to make things easier on you.

So why bother to compete at all? Many clubs don't. The decathlon is something that active clubs can use to bring their members together behind a common activity which promotes the group. This gives the club more of a feeling of unity, which is very important in keeping the club active and growing. If that's not enough for you, consider that we offer some pretty nice prizes. The winning club receives the fabulous big trophy and a selection of new gaming products valued at over $300. Second place takes home a really great trophy and new gaming products worth at least $200. The third place club wins a very nice trophy and gaming products worth at least $100. All clubs who can earn at least 10 points in the contest receive a nice consolation prize. All prizes will be awarded at the Awards Ceremony at the WINTER FANTASY convention in February of 1999.

The Rules

Enter up to ten events from the selection below. You can enter up to four Tournament Play events, all three Writing events, and you are automatically entered in all three Service events. You must earn points from one event in each category to be considered for the big prizes. Simple, huh?

I[0] Tournament Play

Tournament play event this year is divided evenly between individual play and team play. Your club can enter up to four of these events, two individual and two team. A different club member must play in each of the individual events. Several clubs may get points from the same tournament, but only one club member can enter a given tournament. Pick from the list of conventions below; the conventions have been chosen so that they allow almost everyone a chance to get to some of them. If the player does not show up, then the club can enter another play event to replace the missed one as soon as the scoring data is posted and we see that the player did not show up.

To enter a tournament play event, simply send the form that comes with this article, or the one on the website (hint, hint) at least two weeks before the convention date. That insures that we have it before the convention starts, and that is all we need. The player need not write anything special on his summary form, as the database will find the occurrence of play once the points have been posted.

List of Available Conventions

All specific tournament information will be posted on the website and in *Polyhedron* as soon as the events for the convention have been confirmed.

Convention	State	Month	Individual Play Event Available	Team Play Event Available
WINTER FANTASY™ Show	IL	Feb.	Yes	Yes
ConnCon	CT	March	Yes	—
Weekend in Ravens Bluff	All over	April	Yes	—
Ben Con	CO	May	Yes	—
Three Rivers Game Fest	PA	May	Yes	—
Origins	OH	July	Yes	Yes
Comicon International	CA	July	Yes	Yes
GEN CON® Game Fair	WI	Aug.	Yes	Yes
Dragon Con	GA	Sept.	Yes	—

If you feel that you cannot get to these conventions, take heart. Conventions can be added to this list if they ran more than 50 tables of RPGA events last year and request to be added four months in advance. We encourage any convention which would like to be added to contact HQ. Team events are especially welcome, as there are few of these on the list and most clubs will want to get to one locally. Team events added to this list must have at least five teams participating for the event to be added to the Decathlon. We'll run the list of exact events for the cons as soon as we know them, and the form on the website will have the most up-to-date list as well. Any new cons added will be listed in the *Polyhedron* as soon as possible.

Points for Tournament Play
Individual Play
First place: 4 points
Second place: 2 points
Participation: 1 point
Team Play
First place: 5 points
Second place: 3 points
Participation: 1 points

Writing Events

In a marked departure from previous years, we have streamlined this category to three events. The entry instructions for each event follow the event description.

Best Club Newsletter or Website
Deadline: September 30
First place: 5 points
Second place: 3 points
Participation: 1 point

This event has been expanded from last year to include websites, so that clubs can compete on the internet as well. For newsletters, HQ must receive at least four different newsletters from your club between January 1 and October 31. You do not need to submit any forms. Just send us the newsletters. If you send any newsletters at all you will be entered. Criteria for judging include presentation, informative content, and regularity of production.

For websites, HQ must receive emails from your club webmaster at least four times between January 1 and October 31. The email must include the website address and a summary of the changes in content since the last update. We will visit the site, and use the emails to determine how regularly content is updated. Judging criteria include presentation, informative content, and regularity of updates, just like for newsletters.

Secret tip for winning: we at HQ favor informative content and regularity of production over presentation, so don't feel that your newsletter cannot compete with a snazzy-looking website.

One Round Tournament
Deadline: June 30
First place: 5 points
Second place: 3 points
Participation: 1 point

Multi-Round Tournament
Deadline: August 31
First place: 6 points
Second place: 4 points
Participation: 2 points

Write a one-round or multi-round tournament in any game system which is used in the tournament program. Each tournament round must include six or more well-developed encounters and necessary maps. Player characters are required when applicable. LIVING™ setting events are allowed in this category this year. However, the tournament must be written especially for this category, and not submitted also for a convention or for any other use. All entries must adhere to the RPGA Standards of Content as published in the Membership Handbook and on the website, and must be reasonably free of spelling and grammatical mistakes. For AD&D tournaments, all stat blocks must be correct. Entries should be no longer than 30,000 words, not including characters. When writing, try to strike a balance between including the necessary information and being overly verbose.

To enter a tournament, simply follow one of the these two methods:

- Submit a disk copy of the submission in a format readable by MS Word (we recommend RTF), a printout of the submission, and a Decathlon Entry Form (found at the end of this article, which includes the disclosure form).
- Complete the Decathlon Entry Form on the website, which is a "mailto" link, attach a copy of the submission in a format readable by MS Word, and send it along. Put a Standard Disclosure Form in the mail to HQ at the same time to keep it legal.

Service Events

In service, Club members work together for the betterment of their club, the Network, the hobby, and the community. Entry for these events has been simplified immensely. You don't even need to tell us you have entered, because we know you already have entered. You don't have to send a roster or anything, because we have one in our database. You might want to contact us though, near the end of the event period, just to make sure we are crediting you properly. You will receive points in these events as soon as a result is recorded. For example, if you recruit new members, then you will get points. You will not get points if you do not recruit at least one member. We will publish standings in these events as we know them (quarterly is our goal).

Points for Service Events:
First place: 6 points
Second place: 4 points
Participation: 2 points
No participation: 0 points

Most Tournament Rounds Judged
Event Period: January 1 to November 30

All rounds of (voting) Network events judged by club members during the event period will qualify and be counted. No writing on the scoring pack required this year; we'll just find the occurrences of judging by RPGA number. This year we are going to normalize this event by size of the club, so the results will be in terms of average number of rounds judged per club member.

Most Service to the Network
Event Period: January 1 to November 30

Service points earned by all club members will be totaled at the end of the event period. We are averaging this one too, so the results will be measured in terms of average service points earned per club member. You can earn Service Points for the following activities:

- Working at conventions[1]
- Managing the RPGA tournaments at a convention[1]
- Raising money for charity[1]
- Playtesting for the Network or for TSR[2]
- Serving as a Regional Director[2]
- Authoring an article published in *Polyhedron*[2]
- Authoring a tournament which is sanctioned for Network play[3]
- Judging in the Adventurer's Guild Retail Program[4]
- Running sanctioned demos of TSR product in stores[4]

[1] To get these points, the organizer of the activity must submit a report to HQ naming the people who should receive Service Points.
[2] HQ tracks this manually through the database.
[3] The database tracks this automatically. Cool, huh?
[4] This data would be collected from the scoring sheets for the game session or demo.

Most New GUILD-LEVEL™ members recruited at Club Game Days
Event Period: Jan.1 to Nov. 30

Game Days are one-day conventions with one or two slots of Network games only. Clubs can run gamedays for their club meetings or in public venues to recruit more members. This event will count all GUILD-LEVEL members recruited at Club Game Days. Clubs will have to write their club ID on the membership card or application so that we can count them as they come in. This event is not averaged, so total new members recruited is the magic number. Be sure to have recruited members who call or use the website indicate that they were referred to the RPGA by your club so that you get credit. ❑

Here's the form. Fill it out. Send it in. No headache required.

1998 Network Club Decathlon Entry Form

This form is all you need to enter any Decathlon event requiring an entry form. The Standard Disclosure Form is included in this form. Each entry must have its own form, but you may include as many forms as you like in the same envelope. Event entries must be received (not postmarked) by the deadline listed in the event description. If you enclose an addressed and stamped postcard with each entry, we will confirm receipt.

Club Name: _____

Decathlon Event Category (circle one): **Tournament Play** **Writing Event**

Player's/Author's Name: _____ **RPGA # (required):** _____

For tournament play: Tournament Event: _____

If an emergency requires you to change the player representative at a convention after you have submitted this form, contact Network HQ by phone (and leave a voice mail if you do not get a person) and make the change BEFORE the event begins. Oversleeping, advancement in another event, and similar occurrences are not emergencies. Medical problems, being called to judge, and similar incidents are emergencies.

For writing events: Title of Submission: _____

I submit my materials voluntarily on a non-confidential basis. I understand that this submission by me and its review by the RPGA Network does not, in whole or in part, establish or create by implication or otherwise any relationship between TSR, Inc. and me not expressed herein. I further understand and agree that the RPGA Network, in its own judgment, may accept or reject the materials submitted.

I agree that the RPGA Network may have a reasonable period of time to review my submission. The Network will return my submission to me provided it is received by the Network with a self-addressed stamped envelope. The Network shall not be held responsible, however, for items or materials which are accidentally damaged or lost.

I understand that the acceptance by the Network of this disclosure does not imply or create 1) any financial or other obligation of any kind on the part of the RPGA Network except as herein provided, 2) any confidential relationship or guarantee of secrecy, or 3) any recognition or acknowledgment of either novelty or originality.

I understand and agree that if the submission utilizes or is based on characters, settings, or other materials owned by TSR, Inc. or if the submission contains trademarks and/or other proprietary material owned by TSR, I shall not be free to submit the submission for publication to any person or firm other than TSR.

I further understand and agree that the Network has the right to revise and copy edit any accepted version of the submission for content, style, clarity, typographical errors, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization in accordance with standard usage and/or style manuals or accepted dictionaries and encyclopedias. I also understand that the Network and TSR, Inc. have the right to publish the submission at their own expense in such style, form, and manner and at such a price as they deem suitable.

I warrant that the submission never has been published and that it is original and does not violate the rights of any third party. I also warrant that I am the sole owner of the submission and that I am of legal age and am free to make agreements relative to this submission or that I am the authorized representative of the submitter (circle one: Parent, Legal Guardian, Agent, Other:_____), who is the owner of the submission.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone (day): _____

Email Address: _____

Return this form and submitted materials to:

Games Decathlon, RPGA Network, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707

Conventions

Featuring Network Sanctioned Tournaments

MARSCON
When: Jan 9-11 **Where:** Williamsburg, VA–Ramada Inn-Historic
What: RPGA® AD&D®, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, Star Wars, Werewolf, LIVING CITY™, more!
Cost: contact for details
Contact: marscon@erols.com

DREAMATION
When: Jan 29–Feb 1 **Where:** Newark, NJ–Holiday Inn Jetport
What: RPGA LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, Star Wars, and more.
Cost: Contact for details
Contact: Frank Timar, 101 Yorktown Dr., Mt Laurel, NJ 08054

BASHCON
When: End of Feb **Where:** Toledo, OH–University of Toledo Student Union
What: AD&D, Living City, Star Wars, Virtual Seattle, Paranoia, more!
Cost: contact for details
Contact: Steve Brindle at: sbrindle@top.eng.utoledo.edu

GAMER'S CON IV
When: Mar 20-22 **Where:** Cherry Hill, NJ–4 Points Inn
What: guest: Jason Alexander Behnke, first run LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH Interactive. Open "Lords of Gaming" contests. Artists, auction, computer games, more!
Cost: $30 pre-reg, $40 at door.
Contact: Heleen Durston 732/657-3311 http://www.multigenre.com

GEOCON
When: Jan 16-18 **Where:** Atlanta, GA
What: Lots of LIVING CITY™ events
Cost: contact for details
Contact: George Abear at: tsroberyl@aol.com

WEEKEND IN RAVENS BLUFF
In April, five new LIVING CITY events will take place across the country and online! Details will be coming soon, so don't make any other plans. Block off the entire month of April for this event. Save all your money. Sell your possessions. Ignore responsiblities. If you miss out on Weekend in Ravens Bluff, you're a disgusting toad (void where prohibited).

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '97
When: Mar 27-29 **Where:** Carbondale, IL–Southern Illinois University
What: RPGA events, AD&D, Shadowrun, A&A, Warhammer 40K, M:tG, other card, RPG, miniatures, and board games.
Cost: $10 pre-reg, $12 at door
Contact: Joel Nadler at 618/529-4630 or email: ECGamCon@aol.com website: www.siu.edu/~gamesoc

WRIGHT STATE GAME FAIR
When: Jan 17-18 **Where:** Fairborn, OH–Wright State University
What: AD&D, 3 Living City events, Star Wars, Shadowrun, Call of Cthulhu, Torg, more!
Cost: contact for details
Contact: Allen V. Gifford at: gifford@cfanet.com

CON OF THE NORTH
When: Feb 20-22 **Where:** St. Paul, MN
What: 2 new LIVING CITY tournaments, AD&D, and oh, so much more!
Cost: contact for details
Contact: Marc Soderberg at: Fsym@aol.com

MEGACON 98
When: Mar 13-15 **Where:** Orlando, FL–Orlando Expo Center
What: Hundreds of tournaments and demos. 100,000 sq. ft. of exhibit hall and gaming area. Fantasy art show and auction. 200+ guests!
Cost: $12/day, $30/3-day pass
Contact: www.blueearthpress.com/megacon/

MILWAUKEE SUMMER REVEL
When: Jun 5-7 **Where:** Milwaukee, WI–The Inn Towne Hotel
What: guests: Gary Gygax, Janet Pack, Tom Wham. First-run events, Living City, LIVING JUNGLE™, CoC, Boot Hill, Paranoia, miniatures. M:tG, Wham-a-Thon, more!
Cost: $20 pre-reg
Contact: Bruce Rabe, Summer Revel, PO Box 779, New Munster, WI 53102

Classifieds...

COLLECTOR looking for original D&D® Gazeteers 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9 (KARAMEIKOS®, GLANTRI®, Alfheim, Rockhome, Five Shires, Minrothad) and BATTLESYSTEM® supplements for AD&D®. Will pay up to $30 per item. Write: Russel Holmes, 1336 Monte Vista Ave. Apt A, St. Helena, CA 94574.

LOOKING FOR PEOPLE in the Johnstown or Cambria county areas who would like to join the RPGA® Network and start a club in the next couple of months. Write: Jesse K. Blough, 620 Wynn Ave., Apt. 620, Johnstown, PA, 15906-1448 or call: 816/536-1907.

LOOKING FOR PLAYERS and DMs in the southeastern New England area to form a gaming group. I play AD&D, Shadowrun, and Star Wars. Also interested in wargames. Players must be mature, no hack 'n' slash. If interested, call 508/995-7089 or write David "Bryon" Kuehne, 5 Beechwood Dr., Acushnet, MA 02743-1880.

WANTED: Any or all FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting items, novels or materials. The older the better. Send a list w/prices (will buy or trade) to: Anthony Thomas, Box 3092, PSC#3, APOAP 96266.

MAINE WANTED: contributors to the Shadow Glacier Newszine. It will be mostly devoted to the world of GREYHAWK® and FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign settings. Looking for new magical items, spells for bards, dragonmagic, fantasy stories, short adventures, and new creatures. First issue should already be out. Please indicate if you want to be included on the UMF Table Gaming Club mailing list. Write: Kenneth McDonald, P.O. Box 63, North Monmouth, ME 04265.

LARGE EMPTY COLUMNS await text. If you like roleplaying games and want to trade, sell, buy, talk about, run, find, cry over, fondle, mulch, incinerate, collect, or play them, put a classified ad in *Polyhedron* for it. Free to GUILD-LEVEL™ members, it's a proven way to locate the things you want. We have special ad forms downloadable from our website, or email or mail your legibly handwritten ad to P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057. Please don't exceed 500 characters, and stay in bounds of commonly-held decency. Otherwise, go nuts. The RPGA Network staff reserves the right to edit or deny classified ads for any reason, so don't give us no lip.

POLYHEDRON Magazine (the official newsletter of TSR Inc.'s ROLE PLAYING GAME ASSOCIATION℠ Network) is published bimonthly by TSR, Inc. ✍ P.O. Box 707. Renton, WA 98057. ☎ 425/245-2292. Fax: 425/226-3182. Email: <polyhedron@wizards.com> ¶ POLYHEDRON Magazine is mailed free to all GUILD-LEVEL RPGA® Network members. Membership rates for North America US$20. Foreign rates US$40 per year (air mail). Prices subject to change without notice. Change of address must be received at least 30 days prior to effective date of change to ensure uninterrupted delivery. ¶ Unless special arrangements to the contrary are made prior to publication, materials submitted for publication in POLYHEDRON Magazine are accepted solely on the condition that the material may be edited and published in POLYHEDRON Magazine or in RPGA Network sanctioned tournaments and events. TSR and the RPGA Network shall make no other use of the materials unless TSR and the author or artist enter into a written agreement regarding such use. TSR grants prospective authors a non-exclusive right to use copyrighted materials of TSR in their submissions to TSR. An author, however, shall have no right to publish or permit someone other than TSR to publish a submission that includes any copyrighted materials of TSR without first obtaining the written permission of TSR to do so. Letters addressed to the RPGA Network or TSR, Inc. will be considered as submissions and may be printed in whole or part at the discretion of the editor unless the sender specifically requests otherwise in writing. Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed in POLYHEDRON Magazine are those of individual authors, not necessarily the opinions of TSR, Inc., the RPGA Network, or its staff. Standard Disclosure Forms, Writing Guidelines, Tournament Request Forms, Membership Forms, Club Forms, and Classified Ad Forms are available from Network HQ. ¶ ® and ™ designate trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. ¶ © 1997 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved. ¶ Other product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

Island Campaigns

Part 6: Strange heroes, strange adventures

by Roger E. Moore

A World of Your Own

Part 6?!?

Have you missed an issue? Are you a new member and wonder what Island Campaigns parts 1 through 5 were like?

Fret not! *Polyhedron* back issues are available from Network HQ for a pittance! Ranging from $3-10 each, they're a deal at any price. See the inside back mailer for details on ordering these and other quality Network products.

We turn once again to our DM of the month, Stephen, who must scribble down the outlines of his SPELLJAMMER® campaign-to-be. What points will shape his scenarios in the Tears of Selûne?

Stephen decides on the following:

1. His adventure will start in Faerûn in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, move to the Tears of Selûne, then return to the Realms at its conclusion. This allows his Realms-loving players to have a wildspace adventure close to their old homestead.

2. The adventure's outcome will have a direct effect on some of the characters of the Realms. The PCs need not save the world, but their adventure will be relevant to at least a few of the peoples of Faerûn, whether NPC rulers or the PCs themselves. This keeps the players involved and allows for tie-in adventures later on, run by Stephen or another DM.

3. Speaking of tie-ins, Stephen elects to use some NPCs, monsters, magical items, and places described in previously published SPELLJAMMER or FORGOTTEN REALMS materials, to give his adventure an air of reality and campaign legitimacy. If possible, he will also tie his adventure in with previous Realms adventures in his group, so the group's experience in the Realms has continuity and "reality."

4. The adventure's settings will include several worldlets in the Tears, showing the variety of settings possible in an islands campaign. And players will have the option of bringing a PC from the standard Realms campaign or creating a new PC with a wildspace background.

Leaving the World Behind

Stephen's high-level group has just completed a long adventure using the two boxed sets about Undermountain. The weary group will start Stephen's adventure in Waterdeep.

Stephen will use the DUNGEON CRAWL™ adventure *Stardock*, which he has just purchased and has reasonable hopes that no one in the group has already read. To be on the safe side, he has made significant changes in the adventure.

The beginning of *Stardock* is left as is. The date is adjusted to Higharvestide 1367 DR, two years earlier than given in the module, to fit the current campaign time. This requires minor alteration of the motives for some villains in the adventure. The PCs are also warned by Khelben Arunsun and others to never reveal the identity of their rescue victim.

Once the PCs reach Stardock itself, however, things change. The Rift *gate* between Stardock and Undermountain is destroyed by the villains to prevent the PCs from escaping or more heroes from gaining entry to Stardock; easy return to Undermountain is not possible. Halaster Blackcloak is in a magical coma and may be dying. (The coma helped the villains read his thoughts.) The only hope for him is to get medical and magical attention from a nearby source—and that is the Rock of Bral, to which the PCs are directed either by the new PC Stephen adds to the group (see below) or by

papers found in Stardock.

A spelljammer, a common hammership, is kept at Stardock in Stephen's version of this adventure. Unknown to the PCs, this hammership was hijacked several years ago by mind flayers from Glyth, a distant world in Realmspace. The PCs could use this ship to return to Waterdeep, but this will not cure Halaster's condition and will reduce their final reward. If the PCs take the ship to Bral, no one there will think oddly of it except for the mind flayers, who know its origins at once. The illithids will correctly surmise that Stardock is no longer held by its former owners, and they will quickly send word to their allies at Glyth to prepare an attack on Stardock and the PCs.

The SJR5 *Rock of Bral* accessory is the next text used for the adventure's setting. Once there, the PCs must seek out Gamalon Idogyr, a wizard noted in the villains' papers to have knowledge of the methods they used to put Halaster in his magical coma. Though the papers make Gamalon appear to be evil, in fact he is of good alignment and knew of the coma-inducing magic only because he had seen it used before and wanted an antidote for it. He has set aside this project for more important business until the PCs find him. (Gamalon appears in SJR5 on page 32.)

Finding Gamalon is only part of the trouble. If the PCs have been incautious and have told many people who they have rescued, it will be only minutes before various factions on the Rock of Bral—many of them criminal groups—check the authenticity of their claims. Very few people have ever seen Halaster (Gamalon is one of them), but magic can determine his identity. Halaster is widely known as the creator of Undermountain, and the secrets his mind holds are worth killing for, so far as criminal groups are concerned. The PCs will then be attacked multiple times, perhaps simultaneously by rival groups.

To cure Halaster, Gamalon needs a substance from another colony in the Tears, a dwarven citadel named Whitestone (first described in DUNGEON® Adventures #28, "Visitors from Above"). Some PCs must go to Whitestone and obtain this material by offering the dwarves a reward for it, while others must go back to Stardock to grab papers and materials left behind that will assist Gamalon's attempt to cure Halaster.

The group going to Whitestone discovers that a royal wedding is taking place there, and few dwarves are on hand to greet them. To get the substance, the PCs must use stealth and trickery to get into the place where the substance is stored and make away with it. The substance is toxic and will paralyze anyone who touches it. The dwarves will not be pleased to know that it has been stolen.

At Stardock, the PCs have no trouble getting inside and hunting for what they need. However, a spelljammer from a very hostile group docks soon after the PCs do. Neogi and umber hulk slaves from Journey's Legg, the neogi hideout in the Tears, have come to pay their sometime-allies in Stardock a business call. Their allies were eliminated long before the PCs arrived, but the neogi will assume differently once they spot the PCs. The fight will be severe. Stephen makes use of "The Ecology of the Neogi" from DRAGON® issue #214 and "Magic with an Evil Bite" in issue #184 (with new neogi spells).

Once Halaster is cured, he can return to the Realms on his own. The PCs can be sent home by Halaster or can return home on their hammership, exhausted but richer for their experience.

New Faces, New Races

To work the group more deeply into his adventure, Stephen seeks out one player in the group to take a special character at the start of the campaign. This character can also be added to the group as an NPC, then played by any anyone whose own PC is put out of action.

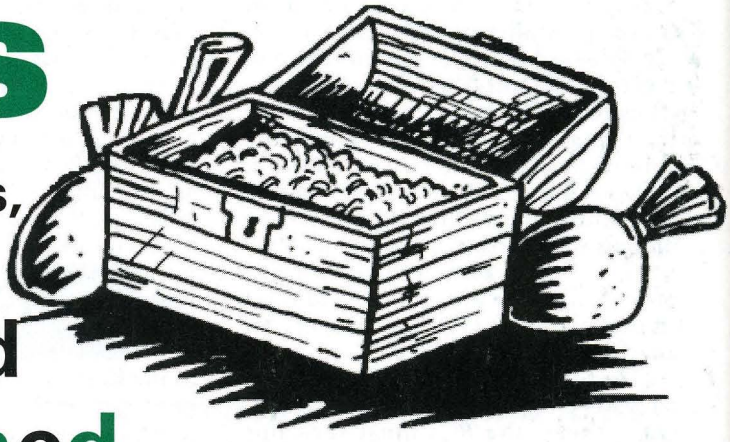
The new PC is a moon elf, a 10th-level ranger from Evermeet using the corsair kit from CGR1 *The Complete Spacefarer's Guide*. He works on special commission for Evermeet's queen following the Second Unhuman War, attacking scro ships in the vicinity of Toril, Selûne, and the Tears. (The Second Unhuman War is described in "Campaign Classics: The Scro" in DRAGON Magazine Annual #1.)

Stephen wants the moon elf to have considerable knowledge of wildspace for use in the adventure. To simulate this, Stephen photocopies material on Realmspace, the Tears of Selûne, the Rock of Bral, and the elven Imperial Fleet (and its connections to Evermeet) from SJR2 *Realmspace*, SJR5 *Rock of Bral*, and portions of the original SPELLJAMMER boxed set and the *War Captain's Companion* boxed set; this goes to the elf's player.

Other PCs can be developed if players do not wish to use their regular PCs. A giff fighter with the marine kit (from CGR1) could work with the moon-elf ranger/corsair as a partner. A hadozee fighter/thief, secretly a spy for the elven Imperial Fleet, could join the group at Bral to eliminate threats to all spacefaring elves. A human thief using the Aperusa kit (CGR1) could charm her way into the group in Waterdeep or even on the Rock of Bral, picking up anything of interest and lending "color" and humor to the adventure.

Firearms, often used in SPELLJAMMER adventures, can be developed using the rules given in the article "Sorcerous Six-Shooters," in DRAGON issue #232. A few new magical items could be added to the campaign by using the article "Bazaar of the Bizarre: Magic from the Stars" in DRAGON issue #159. ❑

Behind the Screens



a treasure trove of tricks, tips, and techniques to keep GMs IN CONTROL and players entertained

by Ed Stark

At the '96 GEN CON® Game Fair, some of TSR's finest gaming minds sat as the panel of a seminar: What's a DM to do? *For those who didn't get a chance to attend, here is the next installment by BIRTHRIGHT® designer and purveyor of well-groomed mustaches, Ed Stark.*

NPCs should be the backbone of any good campaign setting. The people who populate your game world have to seem real and interesting to your players. For a player to roleplay well, he needs supporting characters to play around, against, and with. Here are a few tips on making believable, interesting NPCs:

Everyone Has a Name and a Face

Most NPCs you run will probably be two-dimensional, or even stereotypical. That's okay. When PCs go into a shop to buy provisions for an important adventure, the game may not improve to spend a n hour developing the shopkeeper's personality quirks and habits. However, as the game master of your own fictional universe, you may want to introduce the shopkeeper by name, give a description of his looks, and perhaps show some aspect of his personality (he could be curious, loquacious, or cheap). Keep track of this information, and the next time PCs visit this shop, they'll visit the same shopkeeper.

You Are What You Do

Players are usually more interested in NPCs who can do things for or to them. Give every NPC your players encounter, no matter how minor, a job or role in your world. This position may not be immediately evident, but *you* should know it for future reference.

For example, if the PCs get into a bar fight with a band of local drunkards, it might be interesting to know what these ruffians do when they aren't all liquored up. If one of them is the local blacksmith, they may have an uphill battle getting their horses shod and weapons repaired next time.

All NPCs Aren't Cowards (or Stalwarts)

Roleplay your NPCs realistically. If a band of heavily-armed PCs capture some 0-level bandit and interrogate him, you should have a good reason for him not to crack, or he *will* crack. Don't roleplay heroics into a character who isn't heroic. Look at NPCs' likely morale and position; even an orc band isn't likely to fight to the death unless incredibly motivated.

On the other hand, higher-level NPCs and monsters won't scare so easily. Just because the PCs want to come off as big and tough doesn't mean the retired gladiator working as a barkeep will back down.

Keep Track of Everything

Create your own little database of NPCs. Link them to places. The easiest way to do this is to have a stack of index cards handy. When the PCs run into any possibly interesting or recurring NPC, write the guy's name (or at least role) on the card and make little notes. "Talks in a funny accent," or "has a limp," might be the extent of it. "The PCs beat him up instead of bribing him," would be important information to record. Then, when the PCs revisit the same area, see if they remember some of their old "friends" instead of creating new ones for them every time.

❑

In coming months, we'll presenting useful GM hints other industry pros.
t what about you? What are ideas about how to GM? We need a whole article, just send best tips and tricks to:

Behind the Screens
c/o RPGA
P.O. Box 707
Renton, WA 98057-0707